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JANINE JANSSEN

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SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

JL Adams

Ilimaq

Glenn Kotche *drum kit/perc*

John Luther Adams *elets*

Cantaloupe F (CD + DVD) CA21112 (47' • DDD)



John Luther Adams has forged a distinctive voice through music that evokes environmental vistas, including his Pulitzer Prize-winning orchestral work *Become Ocean* (11/14). The composer, a longtime resident of Alaska who now lives in New York, doesn't need massive forces to exert his spellbinding touch. In *Ilimaq* ('spirit journeys' in Inuit) Adams employs a single percussionist – a very busy one, at that – and electroacoustic soundscapes to conjure a spectrum of natural panoramas.

The five movements have titles that give a hint of the atmospheres Adams is describing. 'Descent' introduces relentless and surging bass-drum figures against whooshes of electronic sound. The music takes on an even more otherworldly aura in 'Under the Ice', with an array of delicate and metallic percussion blending with screeching, popping and swooping electronics and field recordings. These ideas lead seamlessly into the shimmering bells and aquatic murmurings of 'The Sunken Gamelan'. A barrage of percussion erupts in 'Untune the Sky', which suggests forces that can't be controlled, as if Adams were surveying nature in its wildest guise. Then the music drifts back to the peacefulness of the first movement in 'Ascension', with whispers of sound drifting into the heavens.

Glenn Kotche, drummer in the band Wilco (and a composer himself), illuminates the wondrous and multifaceted percussion colours and effects. There are times when the sonic line between percussion and electronics is completely blurred – a testament to Kotche's nuanced artistry and Adams's compositional magic, which are presented here in both audio and DVD formats.

Donald Rosenberg

GRAMOPHONE talks to...

Denise Tryon

The Philadelphia Orchestra horn player on her new disc of low-lying repertoire

Explain the idea behind the disc...

When I started thinking about recording an album, I wanted to perform pieces showcasing the register of the horn in which I specialize. Since there are so few pieces written for the low horn, I needed to commission new works. So, for me, this album is mostly about the collaboration with the four composers (Miller, Pawelek, Askim and Clearfield). I enjoyed the process of working with each of them on their piece, so it feels very personal to me

And the title's personal, too?

The title, SO•LOW is a homage to my father, who heard me perform all of the works on the album in recital a month before he passed. He had an incredibly dry sense of humour. When I first learned to play the horn, he would always ask after a performance, 'Did you have a solo? Was it so low you could hardly hear it?' It's a pretty terrible joke, but it always made me smile.



What are the challenges of playing 'so low'?

Most of the classical and romantic literature focuses on the mid to upper register of the instrument. As someone who specializes in the lower register, I am interested in developing repertoire encompassing that range of the horn. Some technical difficulties of the low register are developing a beautiful sound, plus fluidly moving through this range.

And what's next?

For my next album, I want to continue commissioning works for low horn. This time I would like to focus on a concerto and couple the new work with Kerry Turner's Concerto for Low Horn in F.

G Gabrieli • J Williams

G Gabrieli *Sacrae symphoniae* – selections

(arr Tim Higgins) J Williams Music for Brass

National Brass Ensemble

Oberlin Music F OC15-04 (68' • DDD/DSD)



The Oberlin Music Conservatory's CD label pays homage to an iconic analogue recording with a recital of 13 antiphonal Giovanni Gabrieli tracks and the world-premiere recording of a new work by John Williams. The players are an all-star crew of 26 brass players

called the National Brass Ensemble, recruited from major US orchestras in Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Detroit and Chicago.

The recording was inspired by 'The Antiphonal Music of Gabrieli', made in 1968 and featuring brass ensembles from the Chicago, Philadelphia and Cleveland orchestras playing 17 excerpts from Gabrieli's *Sacrae symphoniae* (1597), which made Gabrieli's *Canzon per sonar No 2* a classical radio hit. The titles overlap and duplicate, but the National Brass Ensemble score with an exquisite *O magnum mysterium*, which does not appear on the earlier recording.

GLASSWORLDS 3

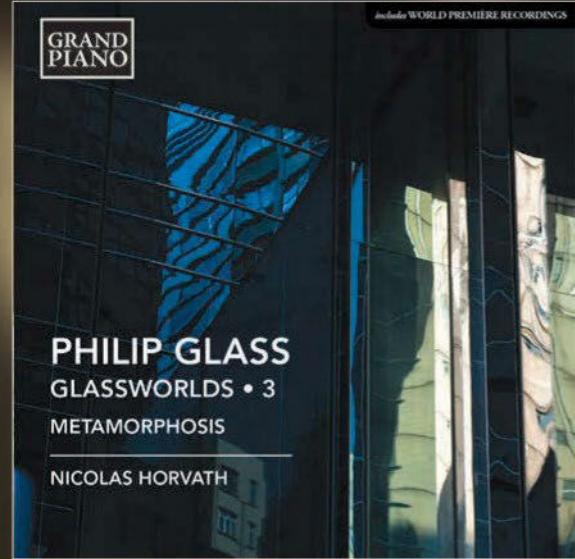
PHILIP GLASS *composer*

Nicolas Horvath

“

Nicolas Horvath, with precise playing and imaginative interpretation has made Glassworlds 2 an indispensable reference for the serious enthusiast as well as marking an important milestone in the evolution of the music of Philip Glass.”

- SEQUENZA 21 REVIEW OF
GLASSWORLDS VOLUME 2

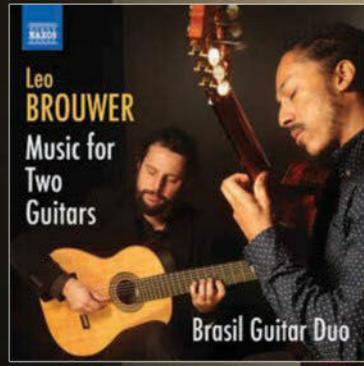


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The Brasil Guitar Duo will appear live, February 19, 2016, 7:00 pm at the Americas Society, 680 Park Avenue in New York. This concert will be live streamed on the Naxos YouTube Channel at:

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“

They both have a gorgeous tone, rock-solid rhythm, beautiful phrasing, and no identifiable technical flaws. This is great playing.”

- KENNETH KEATON, AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE

PHOTO: GAL OPPIDO

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The National Brass Ensemble recreate a classic disc of Giovanni Gabrieli's antiphonal music

Comparing playing styles across nearly 50 years reveals the original three-orchestra-band performances to be more silvery, virtuoso and thrilling, whereas the new versions, arranged beautifully by San Francisco Symphony trombonist Tim Higgins, are more golden and splendid but also more predictably straightforward.

John Williams's eventful five-minute *Music for Brass* – written for the National Brass Ensemble in 2014 – is, as the composer says in his booklet-note, an affectionate salute to ‘the diverse groups forming the ensemble’, and even includes a *Till Eulenspiegel*-type musical joke just before the end.

The Skywalker SoundStage sound, even in conventional mode, is impressive; as a hi-res SACD it is a breathtaking demonstration of the enveloping warmth and sense of space the medium has to offer.

Laurence Vittes

Fantasia'

'Solo Flute Music of the American Continent'

Acosta Solo de Pajarillo **Chavez** Upingos

MC Guarneri Three Improvisations **Higdon** Song

Izarra El amolador **Lauro** La negra **Serebrier** at dusk, in shadows... **Vivanco** Fantasia andina

Martha Councill-Vargas fl

Blue Griffin Ⓜ BGR375 (47' • DDD • S/T/t)



Martha Councill-Vargas returns for her second CD on the Blue Griffin label with a varied programme of music for solo flute by composers spanning the American continents.

Peruvian indigenous music's harmonic language inspired the evocative display piece that opens the recital, *Fantasia andina* by César Vivanco, longtime principal flautist of the National Orchestra of Peru. Along the way, Carlos Chávez's energetic *Upingos* represents the Mexican folk tradition. Jennifer Higdon, herself a flautist, takes a North American bow with an absorbing seven-minute *Song*. The marvellous billing and cooing of Adina Izarra's *El amolador* ('The axe grinder') is the only music using extended techniques. Venezuelan traditions are reflected in a charming transcription of 'La negra', one of Antonio Lauro's *Valses venezolanos*, and in Omar Acosta's irresistible arrangement of *Solo de Pajarillo*, a well-known Venezuelan folklore piece.

The superb craftsmanship of Camargo Guarnieri's *Three Improvisations* adds up in a musically profound 12-minute piece in

which a powerfully rhythmic central 'Ritmico' is flanked by wistful outer movements. Uruguayan composer (and, more notably, conductor) José Serebrier's *at dusk, in shadows...*, with its probably unintended similarity to Stephen Foster's 'Jeanie with the light brown hair', shows a command of creating mood and merging a wide range of materials within a short period of time.

The music is played seductively by Councill-Vargas, Assistant Professor at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo; recorded at the Blue Griffin studio near the campus of Michigan State University, the vivid, full-range sound captures her instrument's infinite nuances of shape and texture. **Laurence Vittes**

Scrapyard Exotica'

M Bates Bagatelles^a **Fairouz** The Named Angels
Ueno Peradam

Del Sol Quartet; ^a**Mason Bates** elecs

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Horn player Denise Tryon in performance: her new disc features works showcasing the lower reaches of the instrument

which is certainly true of their newest disc. Drawing from many corners of contemporary music, the ensemble slip into each piece with chameleon-like ease, as if the different styles and demands are all in a day's work.

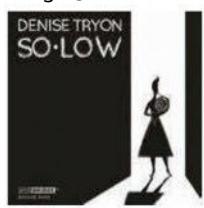
Which isn't to say the Del Sol players ever sound like they're slumming. On the contrary, the musicians thrust themselves into the disc's three diverse compositions, not only playing but also singing and even hissing. All of those abilities are required in Ken Ueno's *Peradam*, a 20-minute burst of modernism with roots in a novel by René Daumal that features the titular object, described as 'a rare mythical diamond-like stone'. Ueno portrays the phenomenon through myriad drones, riotous flights, group vocalism and, from versatile Del Sol viola player Charlton Lee, throat singing. The work is at once challenging and mesmerising.

The title of the disc, 'Scrapyard Exotica', comes from the second movement of Mason Bates's *Bagatelles* for string quartet and electronica, whose own moniker should pique any listener's curiosity. The electronica turns out to be samples of the Del Sol players that mix with the musicians' acoustic contributions. Bates provides a smorgasbord of colourful and pulsating interactions, including elements from the worlds of jazz and pop.

The Del Sol are equally at home in Mohammed Fairouz's *The Named Angels*, four movements built of haunting Middle Eastern material. You're likely to find yourself playing the disc more than a few times in succession. **Donald Rosenberg**

'So Low'

Anonymous *Gummi Polka* **Askim** *A Door Into the Dark* **Clearfield** *River Melos* **T Martin** *Lament* **B Miller** *Hunting Songs* **Neuling** *Bagatelle* **Nielsen** *Canto serioso* **Pawelek** *Irremediable Breakdown* **Yenque** *Tanguito* **Denise Tryon** *hn Julie Nishimura* *pf* **Bridge** *BRIDGE9455* (58' • DDD)



Horn players who spend much of their time in the instrument's low register tend to get the short end of the solo stick, a situation Denise Tryon has set out to remedy. On her new disc, the fourth hornist of the Philadelphia Orchestra performs works written for artists in the sonic nether regions and intended either for recital or audition purposes. The only composer most listeners may know is Carl Nielsen, but the other pieces show their creators in imaginative and appealing form.

From the audition side are Nielsen's *Canto serioso*, a poetic and sweeping miniature, and Hermann Neuling's *Bagatelle*, which blends Straussian swagger and songfulness as it subtly weaves descending episodes into the narrative. Likewise, many of the remaining pieces are cannily crafted to avoid signalling the fact that they're written for low horn. Tim Martin's *Lament*, for example, places the unaccompanied horn in a series of wailing episodes, complete with hand-stopped and ascending passages.

The instrument's low register is exploited to dramatic effect in Peter Askim's *A Door Into the Dark*, which evokes a blacksmith shaping metal with varied equipment. Brett Miller avoids the horn cliché of 6/8 galloping in his *Hunting Songs* by portraying crow, owl and falcon in music of atmospheric lyricism.

Tryon plays these works and other winning pieces by Nathan Pawelek, Dante Yenque and Andrea Clearfield with sonorous fluidity and dexterity, ending with a bit of captivating acrobatics, *Gummi Polka* by an anonymous composer. Julie Nishimura is an ideal partner whenever a piano is called upon to team with this down-but-definitely-never-out hornist.

Donald Rosenberg

'Soft Blink of Amber Light'

DiOrio *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* **Hagen** *soft blink of amber light* **Oquin** *O magnum*

NEW RELEASES FROM



JANINE JANSEN

Brahms & Bartók 1

In a powerful partnership with Antonio Pappano, violinist Janine Jansen offers an unusual coupling of concertos. For the Brahms she is joined by the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and for Bartók's first concerto she is joined by the London Symphony Orchestra.

028947884125



JAN LISIECKI

Schumann

Pianist Jan Lisiecki returns with Schumann's works for piano and orchestra. Joined by Antonio Pappano and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Lisiecki records the Piano Concerto in A minor op. 54, *Introduction and Allegro appassionato* op. 92 and *Introduction and Concert-Allegro*, op. 134.

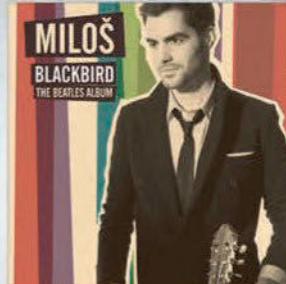
028947953272



SEONG-JIN CHO

Young Korean pianist Seong-Jin Cho recently won the 17th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition Warsaw. DG recorded portions of his award-winning performances and releases an album featuring the Préludes op. 28, Piano Sonata No. 2 and more.

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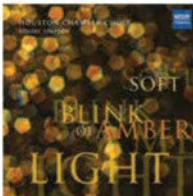
The Houston Chamber Choir celebrate their 20th birthday with a disc of new commissions on MSR Classics

mysterium Theofanidis *Messages to Myself*

DA White *The Blue Estuaries*

Houston Chamber Choir / Robert Simpson

MSR Classics (CD) MS1499 (56' • DDD)



The Houston Chamber Choir celebrate their 20th birthday with first recordings of commissions to five American composers; all save one is more than 50, and in their otherwise unrelated series of reflections on love, life and death each is committed to the power of music immersed in words, and to keeping the choir's characteristic tonal purity, harmonic precision, virtuosity and sense of musical exploration foremost in mind.

For the title-track, Jocelyn Hagen immerses herself meditatively in Julia Klatt Singer's fireflies, 'ancient mating dreams, and the soft blink of amber light'; Christopher Theofanidis's *Messages to Myself*, set to poems by Whitman, Rumi, Amy Beth Kirsten and Yeats, may be the most purely inventive music on the CD. Wayne Oquin's *O magnum mysterium*, commissioned by the Whitewater Chamber Singers at the University of Wisconsin, is a wonderful study in gentle reverence, rising to an emotional peak. There is a similar note of gradually

awakening, nearly spiritual ecstasy in David Ashley White's 'Train Tune', the fourth of his *The Blue Estuaries*, when Louise Bogan's poetry proposes 'in the clear night of stars / Swing their lights westward / To set behind the land'.

Dominick DiOrio's 17-minute *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass*, to poems by Amy Lowell, is scored for the choir with a solo part for marimba. It's a *tour de force* of inventive thinking and unique colour, which DiOrio calls a 'cantata-concerto', and brings the programme to a brilliant conclusion with a cascade of notes at the lines, 'Joy! With the vigorous earth I am one'. Laurence Vittes

'Theme & Variations'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 30, Op 109

Mozart Piano Sonata No 11, K331

Schubert Impromptu, D935 No 3

Carol Rosenberger *pf*

Delos (CD) DE3452 (62' • DDD)



Carol Rosenberger's previous recordings of classical repertoire revealed her to be an extremely sensitive and caring yet relatively unassertive interpreter, and that's the case here. She transforms the disarming lyricism of Schubert's B flat Impromptu's opening

theme into an introspective dirge. The second and fourth variations take wing but are as reticently projected as the minor-key third variation; you won't find the shapely animation and suppleness of Horowitz or Schnabel. The latter's spirit, however, benignly hovers over Rosenberger's protracted intensity at the outset of the variation movement of Beethoven's Op 109.

The only problem with the pianist's generally slow tempi concerns her frequent, increasingly predictable and ultimately generic *ritards* at phrase endings. The second movement transpires at less than a true *prestissimo* and is a shade generalised in detail, although the opening *Vivace* is flexible, poetic and full of subtle nuance.

Rosenberger's polished pianism cannot be faulted in the Mozart A major Sonata's lengthy first-movement variations, yet she downplays the music's dramatic build and exhilarating momentum. Her similarly soft-grained and rounded-off Minuet and Trio emerges as a highly chaperoned dance with no touching allowed. Fortunately the briskly paced, discreetly accented 'Rondo alla turca' displays much more energy and sharpness of character than Rosenberger hints at elsewhere.

The slightly distant perspective conveyed by these recordings dating back to 1997 does justice to the pianist's attractively plangent-sounding Bösendorfer Imperial concert grand. **Jed Distler**



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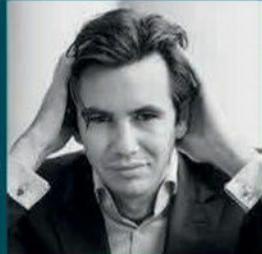
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accordion



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piano



Otto SAUTER
trumpet



Eva LIND
soprano



Giora FEIDMAN
clarinet



Dmitri BERLINSKY
violin



Andrei GAVRILOV
piano

The future's bright – however you listen

I've spent many happy hours over the past month or so talking to record companies about what the year ahead holds, the better to plan *Gramophone's* coverage. I say happy hours, because despite some of what you read about the recording industry, it remains an inspiring and creative business, and one full of people with an infectious passion for music. From major artists on major labels in the most core of repertoire, to projects destined to take all but the most knowledgeable cognoscenti on a journey of discovery, this year looks set to be every bit as enjoyable as the last. We begin by profiling one of today's most impressive violin virtuosos – Janine Jansen – and as the months pass by, look out for features devoted to more of the artists stamping their mark on our own era of recording, as well as explorations of anniversary composers and in-depth analysis of some of the main themes affecting recording.

One of those will undoubtedly be the changing nature of how we listen to and pay for music. As we were going to press, some new research reached me from the BPI (the UK record industry body) and ERA (the Entertainment Retailers Association). We are, it now suggests, increasingly 'multichannel' music listeners. Many readers might be more familiar with this as a term used in our audio pages, but here it's used in the sense of operating across different platforms – that is both online (streaming and downloading) and physical (CD mainly, and vinyl). Of those interviewed, two-thirds of music consumers now define themselves as 'multichannellers' – they stream, but then may also buy the music which means



the most to them. Vinyl is still growing (though from a low base of course), but crucially the decline in CD sales is slowing – something few commentators would have predicted just a few years ago.

The BPI report is across all genres, so I decided to take soundings from differing classical labels, and their response confirms that CD sales are indeed proving resilient. In fact Universal Classics hasn't seen a decline this year when it comes to catalogue sales (anything that isn't a new release), which constitutes a majority of its business. The bulk of UK distributor Select's album sales are also on CD.

Streaming is clearly growing. Universal Classics (DG and Decca) saw a 45 per cent increase last year, while in October indie label Signum saw streaming revenues overtake those from downloads. But is there a link between streaming and buying? Signum observes a link between streaming and downloads when it comes to individual tracks, but not when it comes to albums. Select notices little correlation.

It's complicated. The physical/digital division is affected by such things as how embedded in a culture streaming is (step forward Sweden and Norway), the availability, or not, of a good record shop, and artist activity (selling CDs at concerts is a big part of Signum's sales, for example). But, it's safe to say, that for all streaming's success, classical listeners still like CDs too. So whether you call it multichannel or just buyer preference, as one insider put it 'for now it seems that people like to access classical music in many ways'. Which seems like a positive way to begin the year.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Janine Janson has been performing the Brahms Violin Concerto for over 20 years but has held off committing it to disc until now,' writes **CHARLOTTE GARDNER**, who interviewed the violinist in Berlin.

'The result is a recording that stops you in your tracks, not least because of its inspired pairing with Bartók's First Violin Concerto.'



'Busoni was his own worst enemy to posterity,' says **PETER QUANTRILL**, author of this month's profile

of the composer, pianist and teacher whose 150th anniversary will be widely celebrated this year, 'but his best music draws you in with the peculiar serenity and superhuman frailty identified by Alfred Brendel.'



'Dutilleux is best known for the refined elegance of his mature masterpieces. We seldom hear his early works, which are just as colourful, but more impulsive,' writes **GAVIN DIXON**. 'So it was fascinating to sit in on Pascal Rophé's sessions for the ballet *Le Loup*, one of the more unusual Dutilleux recordings to appear in his centenary year.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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GRAMOPHONE is published by MA Business & Leisure Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom. gramophone.co.uk
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subscriptions@markallengroup.com
Volume 93 Number 1131

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UK subscription rate £62-£103.
Printed in England by Wyndham Heron.

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North American edition (ISSN 0017-310X): *Gramophone*, USPS 5881080, is published monthly with an additional issue in September by MA Business and Leisure Limited, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business c/o Worldwide Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to Gramophone, Worldwide Shipping Inc. (see above). Subscription records are maintained at MA Business and Leisure Ltd, Jesses Farm, Snow Hill, Dinton, Wiltshire SP3 5HN, UK. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

FOR THE RECORD

The latest classical music news



Reviews

RECORDING OF THE MONTH 24

A superb French cello-and-piano duo in Beethoven

ORCHESTRAL

Lisiecki and Pappano in Schumann; forgotten Viennese Kleinmeister; Brahms and Sibelius symphonies; Jack Liebeck in Bruch's Concerto No 1

CHAMBER

Lalo from the Leonore Piano Trio; Moszkowski for violin and piano; Mozart rearranged; Schumann's Violin Sonata No 2 in context

INSTRUMENTAL

Virtuoso Beethoven from Sunwook Kim; Goerner's Chopin Preludes; Horowitz in Chicago

VOCAL

Rachmaninov from Berlin; Genz and Dalberto in *Winterreise*; the complete Korngold songs

REISSUES

Three new box-sets dedicated to Rudolf Barshai, Emil Gilels and the Quartetto Italiano

OPERA

Stemme and Kaufmann in *Fanciulla*; the Royal Opera's *King Roger*; Smetana's *Dalibor*

REPLAY

A monumental collection of historic Nielsen recordings; Heifetz plays Sibelius; Richter rarities

BOOKS

Peter Donohoe reads Dame Fanny Waterman's *Life in Music*; a concise new Stravinsky biography

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION 104

The best versions of Elgar's Violin Sonata, assessed and recommended by Jeremy Dibble

NEW RELEASES

REVIEWS INDEX

Features

JANINE JANSEN

As her new recording of Brahms and Bartók violin concertos is released, Janine Jansen talks to Charlotte Gardner about the joys and perils of life as a 21st-century virtuoso

BUSONI AT 150

Peter Quantrill investigates the legacy of composer Ferruccio Busoni and speaks to two leading interpreters of his music: Geoffrey Douglas Madge and Marc-André Hamelin

DUTILLEUX REMEMBERED

The centenary of Henri Dutilleux will be celebrated worldwide this year. Gavin Dixon meets conductor Pascal Rophé, who has made a new Dutilleux recording with his Loire orchestra

THE MUSICIAN & THE SCORE 46

Lindsay Kemp and Argentinian pianist Nelson Goerner discuss Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op 28, which Goerner has recently recorded for Alpha

ICONS

Jeremy Nicholas explores the career of the Polish-born American pianist Josef Hofmann and recommends his essential recordings

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS 72

Magnus Lindberg is one of the most highly regarded composers of our time and yet remains difficult to pigeonhole, says Andrew Mellor

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED 100

Bryce Morrison and Harriet Smith have a lively debate about pianist Mitsuko Uchida's 1989 recording of Debussy's Etudes Books 1 and 2

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE 102

David Gutman offers his guide to the 10 best recordings of serenades from the 20th century

PLAYLISTS

James Jolly explores the music of Richard Rodney Bennett; Jed Distler takes on toccatas

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS 112

Now including digital concert reviews

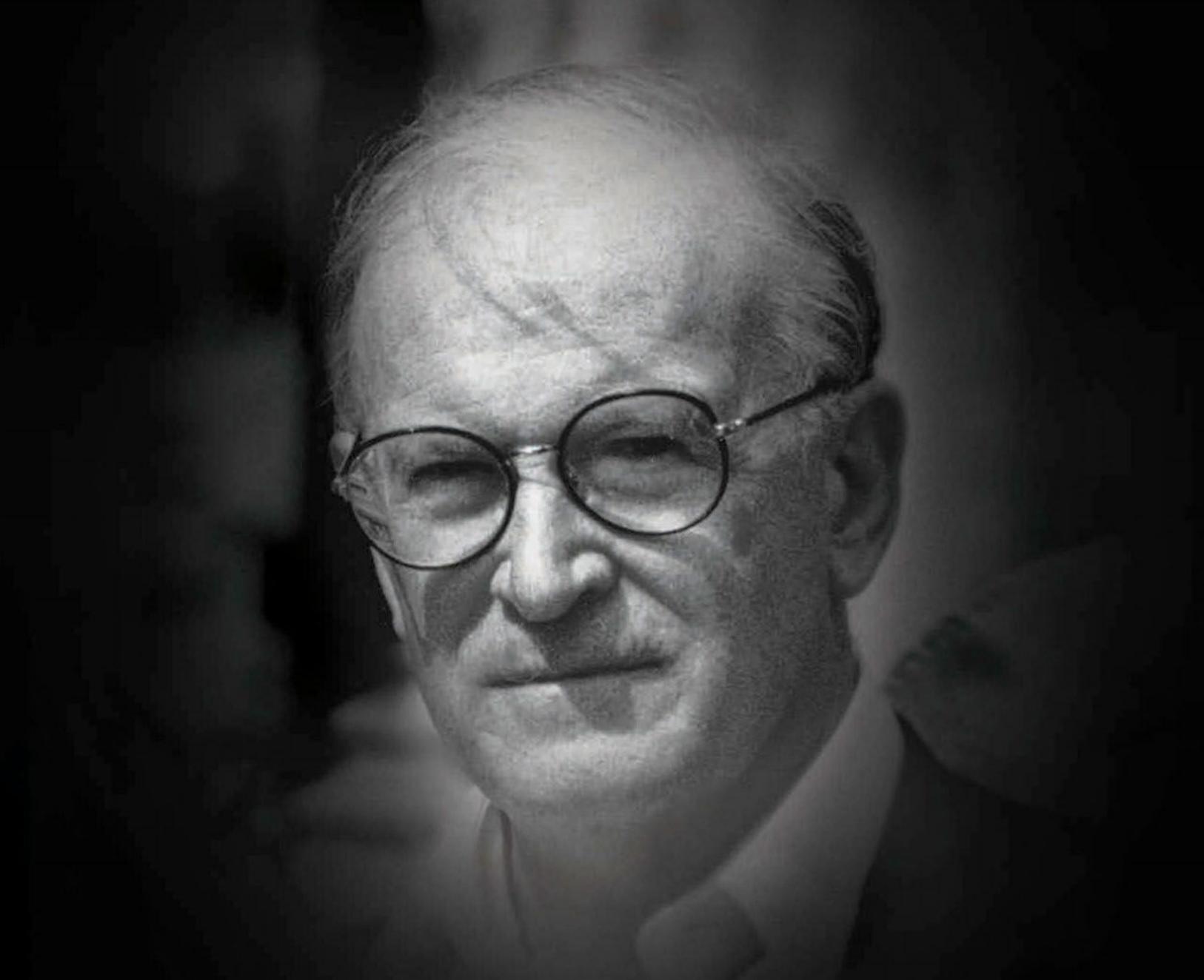
HIGH FIDELITY 115

HEOS by Denon; Chord Mojo

LETTERS & OBITUARIES 124

MY MUSIC 130

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, on his love of Britten and Bach



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GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice G

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



BEETHOVEN
Complete Works
for Cello and Piano
Xavier Phillips vc
François-Frédéric Guy pf
Evidence Classics
► **HARRIET SMITH'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 24**

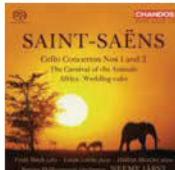
A wonderful recording of Beethoven's cello and piano music, one which emphasises the equal role of each player, and how the best collaborations raise the music to a level higher still



WF BACH
Keyboard Concertos
Il Convito /
Maud Gratton hpd
Mirare
Spirited, elegant

and lively performances, recorded in appropriately vivid sound, of music by the ever-intriguing figure of WF Bach, the eldest son of Bach.

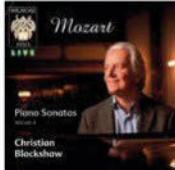
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 26**



SAINTE-SAËNS
Cello Concertos, etc
Truls Mørk vc **Louis Lortie, Hélène Mercier**
pfs **Bergen PO / Neeme Järvi**
Chandos

From the concertos to *The Carnival of the Animals*, Saint-Saëns celebrated by superb soloists who clearly relish the repertoire.

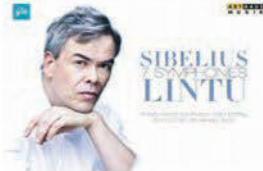
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**



MOZART
Piano Sonatas, Vol 4
Christian Blackshaw pf
Wigmore Hall Live
Following the first three releases in

Blackshaw's Wigmore Mozart sonata series has been a richly rewarding experience – with Vol 4 it comes to an end, but in suitable style.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**



DVD/BLU-RAY
SIBELIUS Complete Symphonies
Finnish RSO / Hannu Lintu
ArtHaus Musik

The imagination and attention lavished on this exploration of

Sibelius is matched by excellent musicianship from a conductor and players immersed in the composer's world.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 40**



BRAHMS, BARTÓK
Violin Concertos
Janine Jansen vn **LSO; S Cecilia Orchestra / Sir Antonio Pappano**
Decca Classics

An inward, personal performance from this month's cover star – a virtuoso bringing deep understanding to well known works.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 27**



'MY ARMENIA'
Sergey Khachatryan vn **Lusine Khachatryan** pf
Naïve

A well-crafted and passionately played tribute to their homeland Armenia and to its music composed throughout the 20th century, from Khachatryan siblings Sergey and Lusine.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



'NÉÈRE'
Véronique Gens sop **Susan Manoff** pf
Alpha

A truly beautifully performed and prepared programme of French song, from the very familiar to the perhaps less so, from one of the genre's most exquisite exponents.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 74**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
'RETURN TO CHICAGO'
Vladimir Horowitz pf
DG

Vintage Horowitz, a fascinating document of the pianist at the age of 83, in music by Scarlatti, Schumann, Liszt and others.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



MOZART
Concertos for Two Pianos
Lucas and Arthur Jussen pfs **ASMF / Sir Neville Marriner**
DG

The first of two sibling discs this month – the formidably talented Jussen brothers join Marriner in Mozart for two performed with virtuosity and great charm.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 36**



DETT
Complete Piano Works
Clipper Erickson pf
Navona

A fascinating and delightful introduction – certainly for me – to an engaging composer from early 20th century America, covering all his piano music, written across his creative life.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 63**



ZANDONAI
Francesca da Rimini
Sols; Freiburg PO / Fabrice Bollon
CPO

A work on the periphery of the repertoire – but conductor and singers here make a strong case for this post-*verismo* opera. A highly enjoyable listen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 95**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at [qobuz.com](http://www.qobuz.com)

FOR THE RECORD

Nikolaus Harnoncourt announces his retirement from the concert platform

The Austrian conductor Nikolaus Harnoncourt – one of the towering figures in the post-war early music revival – has announced his retirement. In a letter placed in the programme at a Vienna Concentus Musicus concert on the weekend he marked his 86th birthday, he said that ‘My bodily strength requires me to cancel my future plans’. Harnoncourt joins a very select group of conductors – which included Giulini and Sanderling – who actually formally retired from the concert platform.

Harnoncourt started his career as a cellist, playing in the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, before deciding that he would like to explore a way of making music more closely aligned with the style of the composers’ own time. In 1953 he founded the Concentus Musicus Wien, an ensemble he conducted right up until his retirement, making numerous recordings with them, including the pioneering Bach cantata series he co-directed



with Gustav Leonhardt, Mozart and Haydn symphonies, Bach’s Passions and a vast swathe of Baroque and Classical repertoire, much of it for Teldec and later for RCA.

Later, working with modern orchestras, Harnoncourt became a pioneer in introducing a more historically aware approach to performance of the Baroque and Classical repertoires. He has won four Gramophone Awards, and his 1992 Beethoven symphony cycle with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe was named Gramophone’s Recording of the Year. He was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by this magazine in 2009 and is a member of the Gramophone Hall of Fame.

Harnoncourt has graced the cover of Gramophone many times, most recently with Lang Lang in 2014



Taylor Swift: Seattle Symphony benefactor

Taylor Swift donates \$50,000 to the Seattle Symphony

The singer-songwriter Taylor Swift, who has sold more than 40 million albums, has donated \$50,000 to the Seattle Symphony in appreciation of their recording of John Luther Adams’s *Become Ocean* (Cantaloupe, 11/14). Swift’s donation to the Seattle Symphony will be used to support two programmes: ‘Link Up: Seattle Symphony’, which will reach over 12,000 school children this year, and the musicians’ pension fund.

This isn’t the first donation that the singer has made to an orchestra: in 2013 she gave \$100,000 to the Nashville Symphony to celebrate her 24th birthday.

Kasper Holten to leave The Royal Opera in March 2017

Kasper Holten has written a letter to staff at The Royal Opera announcing that he will be leaving the company in March 2017. He became Director of Opera in 2011. In his letter, Holten reveals that he was offered a five-year contract extension to begin in 2016, but

Hans Abrahamsen wins the 2016 Grawemeyer Award

The Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen has won the world’s biggest prize (\$100,000) for musical composition, the Grawemeyer Award, for his song-cycle for soprano and orchestra *let me tell you*. The winning work was premiered by soprano Barbara Hannigan with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra (who also commissioned the piece with

support of the Danish Arts Foundation) and conductor Andris Nelsons in 2013.

Abrahamsen’s *let me tell you* is a setting of a libretto by Paul Griffiths, adapted from his 2008 novel, and this is the second time that a musical setting of a text by Griffiths has won the Grawemeyer (Tan Dun’s *Marco Polo* won in 1998). It presents a first-person narrative by Ophelia from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.

Marc Satterwhite, Grawemeyer Award Director, said: ‘The vocal lines exquisitely mirror Griffiths’ fragile texts of the doomed Ophelia. The orchestra is a partner rather than mere accompanist and the composer draws a huge array of colours from the orchestra, delicate and shimmering more often than not, but occasionally in fuller force.’

he turned it down for a seven-month extension to allow The Royal Opera to find the right successor. He also explains that the reason for his departure is to spend more time with his family: 'I love working at ROH – and with all the amazing colleagues here – and it feels very painful to let go of that in 2017. But when I moved to London, my partner and I didn't have children. Now we do, and after much soul searching we have decided that we want to be closer to our families and that means we make Copenhagen our home where the children will grow up and go to school.'

Sir Antonio Pappano, Music Director of The Royal Opera said: 'Kasper Holten has been electric during his time at the Royal Opera House, demonstrating an uncanny energy, perseverance and vision for the future of our great institution. My collaboration with him on *Król Roger* [DVD reviewed on page 88] was one of the most fruitful experiences I have had during my time at this theatre. I am very sad that he has decided he must leave, as I believe it will be a major loss for our company, and for me personally.'

Alex Beard, Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House, added: 'I understand and respect his reasons for moving back to Copenhagen. Although sad that Kasper will be leaving, I am pleased that he has agreed to extend his contract until his new *Meistersinger* opens here in 2017.'

A Gramophone EFG conversation

Join Gramophone at the London Review Bookshop on February 2 at 7pm for a conversation with the Takács Quartet's leader Edward Dusinberre about his new book, *Beethoven for a Later Age* (Faber). Tickets (£10, including a glass of wine) are available from londonreviewbookshop.co.uk



Xian Zhang: adds BBC NOW to her CV

Xian Zhang appointed Principal Guest Conductor of BBC NOW

The BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales has announced that its next Principal Guest Conductor will be Xian Zhang. She will become the first female conductor ever to have a titled role with a BBC orchestra.

Zhang will conduct the orchestra at BBC Hoddinott Hall, St David's Hall and Brangwyn Hall in works by Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich, Rimsky-Korsakov and Berlioz in her first season. She will also conduct BBC NOW at the BBC Proms and take the orchestra on a tour of Wales.

In an official statement, Zhang said: 'I'm so excited to be working with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales; they are a fantastic group of musicians who genuinely love making music, and are a natural team. They have some exceptional qualities that have really impressed me. The first thing we ever worked on together was Ravel's *Boléro*. It was so precise, with the right colour and texture – I was really speechless after the first reading! The musicians rehearse in such a disciplined manner that is not often seen. It's a great pleasure to make music with them and I very much look forward to further developing our relationship in my new role with BBC NOW.'

In 2009 Zhang became Music Director of the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi and she will also become Music Director of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra at the start of the 2016-17 season.

Rhodri Talfan Davies, Director of BBC Wales, said: 'BBC NOW have had an incredible year. I'm confident that alongside Principal Conductor Thomas Søndergård, Xian's creative input will ensure many more memorable moments in the coming seasons.'

Zhang has made relatively few recordings to date, but most recently she can be heard accompanying violinist Rosanne Philippens with the National Youth Orchestra of the Netherlands in Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No 1 on Channel Classics (reviewed in the July 2015 issue).

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COMPOSER GUIDES

The best way to start exploring Gramophone's website is through the new composer pages. Every composer (including Mendelssohn, pictured) whose music has been reviewed in Gramophone since 1983 has their own unique homepage featuring a Latest Reviews carousel, which allows you to discover the most recent recordings of music by that composer and to go directly to full reviews of each disc.



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LIFE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Violinist Janine Jansen talks to Charlotte Gardner about her new recording of Brahms and Bartók, and the busy life of the modern virtuoso

Jan a recording have some imperfection?' muses Janine Jansen. 'Of course it can. I never think, "Everything needs to be perfect". I'm not that kind of player. In one of my very earliest interviews I said, "Better a note played completely out of tune but with the right intention than the perfect note but with none".'

It's early December and the two of us are sitting at the back of the executive lounge of the Hilton hotel in Berlin, deep in discussion about her new recording with Sir Antonio Pappano for Decca: Brahms's Violin Concerto recorded live with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and Bartók's Violin Concerto No 1 recorded in a studio with the London Symphony Orchestra. Jansen actually lives in Stockholm with her husband, the conductor Daniel Blendulf, but a convenient interview-sized window has presented itself as she tours Beethoven's Violin Concerto with Paavo Järvi and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. So, I've been flown out to speak to her here, and it's turning out to be a truly delightful, and sometimes surprising, hour from my perspective.

Jansen is clearly tired. Partly it's the nature of the Beethoven concerto – 'It takes a lot out of you, it's such a beautiful, pure piece' – but probably also because this was her fourth performance of it in the space of six days, and now I'm her second interview of the morning. However, even with the Christmas pop tracks jingling above us on the overhead speaker, it feels as though we're cocooned within a warm bubble of absolute calm, and it's not just the thick carpet, our deep cushioned seats, or the fact that we're practically the lounge's only occupants. It's Jansen herself; she's just so serene. Admittedly this may be partly in anticipation of the few concert-free days she's about to enjoy, returning first to Stockholm and then on to a family event in her childhood home of Utrecht. However, it's also clearly just the way she is. Her answers are thoughtful and long, accompanied by graceful hand gestures. They often take a while to emerge in their entirety as she considers exactly how she wants to express each idea, her eyes fixed on the middle distance in concentration. Sometimes she poses a question or statement only to then question it, and she does that now. For, having just declared intention to be

secondary to perfection she now continues, 'Of course, yes, in a way I completely agree with that, but somehow I also want it to be perfect'. She chuckles before concluding, 'So now I will go for the right note with the right intention! I'm not saying that it works, but that's the goal.'

There's a lot to discuss when it comes to this new release, not least the fact that Jansen is the first violinist to pair the Brahms and the Bartók on the same disc. However, what's perhaps most remarkable of all is that she has waited until the age of 37 to record the Brahms when her relationship with the concerto stretches right back to her teens. 'I played it for the first time with an orchestra when I was 16,' she tells me. 'I remember it very clearly because my father was conducting.' She laughs, acknowledging my surprise, because her father is the Dutch harpsichordist and organist Jan Jansen, and so not exactly an obvious candidate for conducting

Brahms. She explains, 'For years, Saturday afternoon concerts have gone on at the big church in Utrecht. My father was teaching theory and also Baroque and period instruments at the conservatory in Utrecht, so he put together an orchestra from the conservatory students and conducted the Brahms concerto.' She laughs again. 'The church is very boomy! It was like a dream for him, because although he's conducted choirs he mainly plays. Then, for me it was a great opportunity to play the Brahms concerto for the first time with an orchestra, surrounded by the friends I went to school and conservatory with. It was special. And since then I've played it many times. Sometimes one has a break for a few years, and then one starts it again, and then one has a break.' She pauses. 'So, I have really lived with it, and every time one comes back to it one kind of dives into the score again. I rethink every fingering and bowing, and what I am actually trying to say, especially now that I'm getting older and somehow more searching. More doubting, you know? Just part of life, I guess. It's probably an endless search.'

The search has brought her now to what she describes as a 'comfortable time' with the concerto, helped by a couple of important collaborations. The first and possibly the most crucial one came two years ago when she performed it with Bernard Haitink and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. 'You never know how your mood is going to be for a concert,' she explains.



Jansen continues to curate the International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht, which she founded 12 years ago

'I loved the Bartók, and I just knew it had to be connected with the Brahms. It was just an intuitive feeling'

'Sometimes one can feel a little bit more on edge than another time. It's difficult to always just be completely, you know,' and she makes a smooth, steady gesture with her hands. 'But I think about him. There was just something very calm, very powerful. It really made me feel grounded. It's not just a matter of focus or concentration, but just an inner "Ruhe". I think maybe before I was more like a young dog with it!'

Then, to Haitink add Antonio Pappano. The Brahms was the first piece the two of them played together when they first collaborated three and a half years ago, with the Santa Cecilia orchestra. 'He worked with the orchestra very much in an emotional and expressive way, really making them sing,' she remembers. 'I don't know, maybe it's the whole Italian opera tradition. With Brahms you might think that's a strange combination to think about, but I was just really impressed with his *cantabile*, and I loved how natural it was to make music together with him.' They took the concerto on tour together, and when a couple of years later she was due to return to the orchestra with different repertoire, she asked whether instead they could return to the Brahms and this time record it. Not only did the moment feel right, but also the conditions. 'I didn't want to play Brahms in a studio, with the red light and the "now, just do it" she says.

This live element is crucial to what she hopes listeners will eventually take from her recording, with one especial moment in mind. 'For me, the most magical moment in the whole concerto is after the cadenza, and if I want people to think or feel anything during listening then I hope that moment reaches something in them.' She continues, 'In a live concert, if when the orchestra comes back in the audience is evidently thinking, "Right, now it's okay, we can readjust our seating position because the orchestra's playing again," or if they have the little cough they've been trying to keep in, or start unwrapping a candy, then I see it as a failure of myself. Because I feel that when that moment

comes one's almost afraid to make a sound even playing. It just needs to be so, so perfect. Even I kind of tense up, and I somehow feel that an audience would feel the same. And if that doesn't happen...'. She trails off. Her voice through all this has been rapt and earnest, but now her tone brightens and she continues with energy. 'But if it does happen it means I've taken them to that place, and it's beautiful, and in a live concert that can happen. Of course one could get there in a studio, but if it happens in a live concert and everybody, all those 2000 people and the orchestra feel it, then that's something magical. It's so strong, everybody getting together in that one feeling. It's one of those moments that is what it's all about.'

The Bartók was recorded in a studio though, I remind her. 'Yes, but the Bartók is such a different concerto,' she points out. 'Such a different feel, and wonderful to do it with the LSO. We had done it together before – I always

love playing with them, and it just felt completely right to do it in studio with them. When one knows one has limited time then that can add stress, but this felt creative, and also relaxed because of the atmosphere and good vibes.'

The pairing of the two works may be a first, but for Jansen it's a very natural one. 'I first played the Bartók five or six years ago,' she begins. 'I loved the piece, and I just knew it had to be connected with the Brahms. It was just an intuitive feeling.' The obvious link between the two works is of course the Hungarian one, Brahms's concerto having been written for, and in consultation with, Joachim, and with its third movement so very obviously Hungarian in flavour. However, when you listen to the two concertos back to back on this recording you also hear something else which is perhaps a combination of further layers embedded deeper down in the music itself, and of Jansen's own interpretation. It's hard to put your finger on, but it's there, and I'm almost relieved when Jansen also struggles to name it. 'It's not about the key, yet there's something about the two opening themes for me that are related, but actually not at all, but somehow...', she begins. 'Within just the opening solo violin theme of the Bartók, which is the leitmotif of Steffi Geyer, the violinist he wrote this for, the music moves through so many different phases in its colours and different moods. It doesn't go where you think it's going to go. And maybe the Brahms has a kind of more matured statement to it, but very grounded,' emphasising that last word. 'That's how it is. Also, they both start with a simple presentation of the theme without any underlying harmonic pillars, and I find that quite amazing, that both concertos in their two ways are very strongly built. But, in the case of Bartók I really feel it's presenting Steffi in all of her fragility, and every time I start playing that opening I'm almost surprised, myself, at where it's going; the first four notes are so clear and so open, and then it kind of actually goes there,' indicating a space in the air with her hands, 'and then it goes there,' hands darting elsewhere, 'and this darker side, and again it's so fluid.' She laughs. 'I don't know. I try to explain it and it goes completely!'

Over the course of our conversation I've been mentally squaring the softly spoken woman before me, clearly focused entirely on the music itself and guided largely by intuition,

with the somewhat different picture of her that one could build up from the media. It's the breathily excited labels attached to her that interest me, most particularly 'Queen of the Downloads', referring to the success in 2005 of her Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* album in the download charts, which topped the iTunes classical and pop charts in several countries. In fact, one publication goes further and proclaims her to have 'an interest in cutting edge technology'. Somehow, it's just not adding up, and sure enough she gently torpedoes it. The Vivaldi was 12 years ago, she points out, 'and I mean, it was Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*! No, I'm really not thinking about what will download well.'

Equally, Jansen is not active on social media. She doesn't tweet ('I don't even know how to do that!'), and although she has an official Facebook page she's never on it herself. 'Maybe I should be more part of it,' she begins, looking faintly troubled although only in an amused way. 'I know that many colleagues are active on social media, but honestly I don't feel I have even the space for it. It already feels as though there's not enough time or space just to live my life as a musician, and keep contact with my family and my friends. So for me to then start Facebooking? Maybe it's really wrong, and I don't mean to offend anybody or push people away. I really would like to give a lot of myself, but I feel I do that onstage in music, and in making this recording, and being in life with the people that I love and care about. At the moment that takes everything. It's a lot.'

It is certainly a lot. The autumn has seen her performing the Brahms in Munich with Valery Gergiev and in Vienna with David Zinman. She has performed the Bartók in Amsterdam and Bucharest with Andris Nelsons and the Royal Concertgebouw, and in Paris with Daniele Gatti and the Orchestre National de France. A week after this interview, she and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen will reconvene to perform the Beethoven again in Amsterdam, Paris and finally Baden-Baden.

Equally noticeable about her schedule, though, is the entire month off she has built in over the Christmas period, and this very much reflects her approach to work and life these days after a very intense early career. She first took up the violin aged six, inspired by the music-making of her family (in addition to her keyboardist father, her mother is a singer and her brothers a cellist and a keyboardist) and her own first experiences in the church choir and playing the piano. Taught first and longest by the renowned Dutch violin teacher Coosje Wijzenbeek, followed by shorter periods with Philippe Hirschhorn and Boris Belkin, her big break came in 2002 when as a member of the BBC New Generation Artists scheme she made her London debut playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Philharmonia Orchestra. A recording deal with Decca followed, and a sky-rocketing

career whose frenetic pace came crashing to a halt in 2010, with cancelled concerts, and a short but complete break. 'I had to,' she tells me. 'It was just – finish. Maybe it works for somebody else to play the 140 concerts a year or whatever, but for me it turned out that after seven years like that, travelling, all the time alone, it didn't work. So now I try to be more selective. I know who I love playing with, or with whom I would love to play and haven't worked with. I also know what chamber music means to me, so I make sure I devote enough time to that.'

Jansen does devote a great deal of time to chamber music, much of it springing from the annual chamber music festival she founded 12 years ago in Utrecht. As we talk, she's midway through a recital tour with one of her old 'core group' of chamber music friends, pianist Itamar Golam. Other members of this group include violinist Boris Brovtsyn, cellist Jens Peter Maintz and viola player Maxim Rysanov. Her festival has also brought her into contact with new people such as the Ukrainian pianist Alexander Gavrylyuk, with whom she will tour in February. 'He was in my festival for the first time two years ago, and he is a magician,' she says. 'Also, for instance, Denis Kozhukhin, a wonderful Russian pianist with whom I collaborate a lot. So yes, the family has expanded one could say, and it gives me so much to be close with those wonderful friends.'

She also takes an interest in expanding the concerto repertoire, such as the Michel van der Aa Violin Concerto she premiered last year. As for repertoire decisions in general, they are made through

a combination of discussion with the people she's collaborating with, 'but also then a kind of gut feeling'. One concerto she's never played is the Berg, so she's made a space for that next season.

Later, as I turn over our conversation in my head, the thought that keeps returning to me is the way in which Jansen, without being some tech-savvy social media whizz with a clear digital strategy, is truly, honestly engaged with her audiences. There was the way in which, the previous evening as she performed the Beethoven, her entire face and body had lived every moment of the three minutes of music preceding her entrance, meaning that her own emotional journey felt as much a part of the performance as the beauty and easy virtuosity of her actual playing. Another moment that stuck in my mind was the pleasure she took as we wound up the interview in describing to me a concert she'd organised for her Utrecht festival, starring 100 school children of varying musical abilities. 'Maybe it sounds really small, just 100 people,' she had said. 'But to me it felt like doing something really meaningful. It felt good.' Finally, there's the Brahms and Bartók recording itself. For, listening afterwards, as I reached the end of the Brahms cadenza I realised that she'd done it. I couldn't move. ▶ To read Gramophone's review, turn to page 27

I know that many colleagues are active on social media, but honestly I don't feel I have even the space for it'



Jansen with conductor Antonio Pappano, her collaborator on the new recording

'He drew the past around him like an overcoat yet strained to bear the music of the future'

His paradoxical approach to music – and to life – divided opinion, but 150 years after his birth Ferruccio Busoni continues to provoke fascination. Peter Quantrill explores this enigmatic pianist, composer and teacher, in conversation with two leading Busoni pianists

What life had in store for Ferruccio Busoni was settled before his birth in 1866, when his father Ferdinando determined on the middle names of Dante Michelangelo Benvenuto. Birthright or burden? Either way, he worked to be worthy of them, from prodigious boyhood through protean maturity to disillusioned and embittered end. In his time he was an intellectually intimidating figure who tended to rouse in both admirers and fellow artists a baffled awe at his many talents. 'The influence that Busoni has had on our generation, not just as a pianist as most people take him to be, but as theoretician, teacher, innovator, creator – in short as a master in the old sense of the word which made the man and his work one – will perhaps be fully appreciated only by the next.' Fine words from Stefan Zweig in 1918, but they have buttered no parsnips.

Busoni's parents were both musicians – Ferdinando a clarinettist, Anna a pianist – who composed for themselves, to use and to amuse, in the tradition of moderately talented performers. Co-opted as his father's accompanist from the age of seven, Ferruccio later complained that he had no childhood. Yet he remained grateful that Ferdinando had performed the unusual service of giving him a rigorously German education in the arts, fostered by the relatively cosmopolitan environment of Trieste in the 1870s. His Tuscan origins, though, were never forgotten, and they intervened at crucial points in his music, not least the Christmas bells that chime in later piano music such as the Fourth Sonatina and *Nuit de Noël*, and return to open and close the opera *Doktor Faust*.

The boy Busoni wrote music as soon as he could play it, and never lost a Mozartian facility to compose or at least orchestrate in company. Packed off to Vienna at the age of nine, completing his formal education in Graz and then burning the candle at both ends in Leipzig, he graduated from fugues and dances for piano to songs and chamber music. His first 100 or so pieces were written before the age of 12, all of them and

more suppressed by him as juvenilia. From his mid-teens, he read voraciously and wrote in four languages.

Led by the composer, posterity has heard Busoni's own voice first emerge in 1900 with the Second Violin Sonata, whose formal expanses are tellingly anchored by a variation-finales on a Bach chorale. Self-conscious as ever, Busoni regarded the five-movement, 75-minute Piano Concerto as marking an end-point to his first phase of composition. He called it his 'Skyscraper' Concerto: a resonant word for 1904, and symbolising the futility of man's attempts to scale the heavens

no less than the Burj Khalifa or indeed the legend of Faust. Marc-André Hamelin suggested to me that Busoni would more aptly and helpfully have titled the work as a symphony, contemporaneous with Mahler's Sixth.

As a work from one who drew the past around him like an overcoat yet strained to

hear the music of the future, the Concerto is unusual for its accommodation with the present (and also with its composer's often self-repudiated Italian heritage). Yet in the brilliant innovations of the central movement's form, in the assimilated virtuosity which requires the pianist to contribute to the work's unity, and in the finale's Islamic paean to union with a numinous power, Busoni catches a glimpse in sound of a future he would later develop in the influential *Outline of a New Aesthetic of Music*, published in 1907. Part manifesto, part *cri de cœur*, the sketch foresaw the possibilities of microtones and electronic music before singing a more traditional hymn of praise, to the piano – 'Respect the pianoforte!' – and especially to the pedal which uplifts keyboard and hammers from percussive implement to acoustic camera 'of the sky, a ray of moonlight'.

Sound and notation: according to the Australian pianist Geoffrey Douglas Madge, 'You can't discuss how Busoni played without referring to what he wrote, and vice versa. There are great connections between the two. When he was around 30, he got to know Liszt's works much better, and he understood how they were connected with his style of playing, and this triggered a change in his own writing, starting with

'The Second Sonatina shows a complete disregard for any conventional harmonic language... Busoni is looking into the future but what future, I don't know'

– Marc-André Hamelin



Busoni with his St Bernard,
'Giotto', in c1916, by which time
he was 'combining passages
of contrapuntal elaboration
with occult-influenced fantasy'

BUSONI ON STAGE

Within weeks of arriving in Vienna, the nine-year-old Busoni had a small library of operatic scores and a habit of attendance at the city's Hofoper (court opera), where he saw enough to inculcate a lifetime's love for Mozart and a tirelessly expressed repulsion from Wagner. From the first of his own efforts, he sought to strike an ambitious, even precipitous balance between the free-spirited setting of a profound story, as if to come to terms with his own, complex, Italo-German background. Plots were taken up and texts worked on, but nothing came of them until the 'comic-fantastic' *Die Brautwahl* which was finally premiered to a poor reception in 1912, after seven years' hard labour.

By then Busoni already had serious designs on a 'state masterpiece' but produced music for two *commedia dell'arte* entertainments in the interim, *Turandot* and *Arlecchino*, laced with a tart, neo-classical flavour. Ever so gradually, *Doktor Faust* took shape, assembled and adapted from satellite works such as the Second Sonatina and orchestral elegies, not as a response to Goethe's iconic text but again to his own libretto in the style of a medieval mystery play. Determined as Busoni was to avoid any taint of German opera, the Swiss composer Othmar Schoeck could remark with some justice that 'Busoni keeps coming with his Mozart scores, but when he writes something that works, it's always out of *Meistersinger*'.

the Elegies from 1907.' It is no easy task to understand what made Busoni the pianist of his age as Mahler was the conductor. For the keyboard lions of future generations – Kempff, Arrau, Nyiregyházi – study with him in Berlin, or at least an audition, was essential. As though through a glass darkly, we may glimpse why this was with his 1922 recording of the first Prelude and Fugue from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* – a paradigm of Busoni's pianism. Both sections begin soberly, with the illusion of *legato* sustained by quietly terraced dynamics, before spinning into recreative fantasy that does not flinch shy of rewriting the fugue's coda to return in a full circle to the opening of the prelude. For Hamelin, such interpretation defies close scrutiny – 'I can't cut open the goose that laid the golden egg' – but Madge showed me in conversation how the movement from classical sobriety to improvisation makes an active analysis of the fugue's voice-leading.

By 1910 Busoni was a travelling virtuoso, in demand across Europe and America. In Chicago he met Bernhard Ziehn, a friend from Leipzig days (another was Frederick Delius), who expanded his understanding of polyphony. The *Fantasia Contrappuntistica* was the imposing result, a serially reworked development

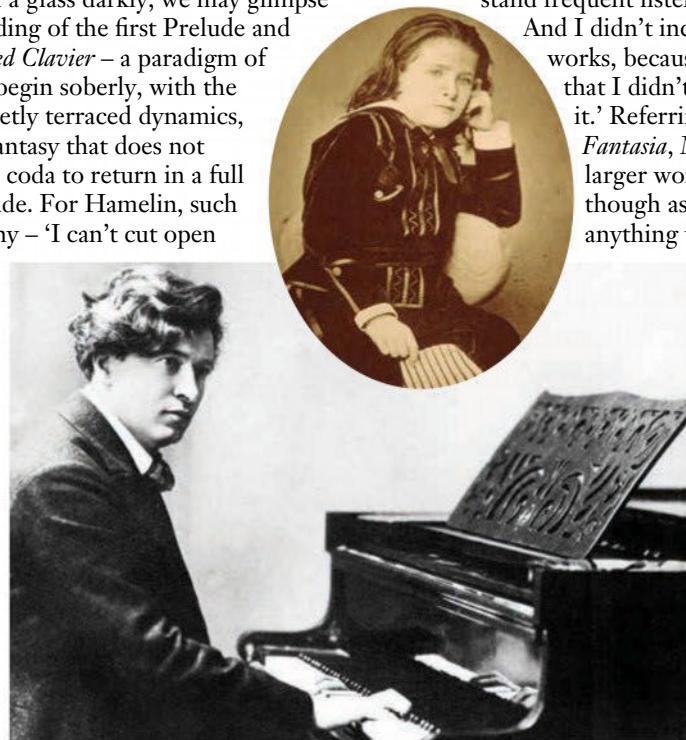
In *Doktor Faust*, Busoni had the ideal subject to embody the visionary ideals sketched in the *Outline of a New Aesthetic*. Love duets and direct representation were deemed frivolous; in his *Style and Idea*, Schoenberg remembered appreciatively how 'Busoni was the first to claim that music in opera must not express what is expressed by the action'. Its vocal lines are angular, 'unsingable' according to Thomas Hampson (twice a *Doktor Faust*, in New York and Zurich), but the opera adds up to a mesmerising drama, principally through the richness of a score that reaches its restrained, quite unoperatic climax in the melancholy, implacable tread of a 'symphonic intermezzo' abbreviated from Delius's favourite work of Busoni, the Sarabande Op 51.

At his death in 1924, Busoni left two substantial scenes unelaborated from sketches. There may be more truth than Romantic hindsight in Hampson's claim that the composer could never have completed *Doktor Faust* to his satisfaction. (The opera was eventually premiered in 1925, in a completion by Busoni's pupil Philipp Jarnach.) The superscription to *Outline* quoted from Busoni's libretto for another unfinished opera based on *Der mächtige Zauberer*, a story by Gobineau (the same French ambassador and author whose repellent racial views were enthusiastically promulgated by, of all lasting ironies, Wagner): 'I wish for the Unknown! What I already know is limitless. I want to go still further...'

of *The Art of Fugue* 'in which Bach and Busoni are fused – how successfully is a matter of opinion,' admitted Egon Petri, Busoni's most gifted and willing advocate. 'The *Fantasia* is a masterwork,' maintains Hamelin, 'but I'm not sure it would stand frequent listening because it's so damn serious.'

And I didn't include it on my set of the late works, because I found it was so anti-pianistic that I didn't want anything to do with it.' Referring to both the Concerto and *Fantasia*, Madge comments that Busoni's larger works 'suffer from over-ambition', though as Hamelin counters, 'No one did anything without ambition!'

Even so, Madge draws a valuable distinction between the singing lines of the early 24 Preludes and the contrapuntal thickets of his later, bolder music. 'His fascination with polyphony compelled him to write in long lines, but he had great difficulty in the continuation of a line. There are some pieces, even the late *Prélude et étude en arpèges*, where the line just disappears. This is one of the largest problems in Busoni's composition technique and I think he knew this. Picasso said, "I don't



A 40-year-old Busoni and, inset, as a child: he wrote music as soon as he could play it

search, I find", but Busoni had great difficulty in finding. That's part of his disillusionment.'

Both pianists agree that Busoni's most perfectly accomplished work was achieved not on his own instrument but with the orchestral *Berceuse élégiaque*, which he composed during London concert appearances in 1909 after the death of his mother. Having made an American tour with steadily increasing disenchantment, he arrived in New York to hear Mahler conduct the first performance in a concert of recent Italian music. Mahler was severely weakened by the endocarditis that would kill him six months later, and never picked up the baton again, but he was supportive of his fellow composer while the critics were baffled in terms that are perennially familiar: 'It is a gruesome work in a modern composer's most modern manner.'

To recreate that moment in history, look up a 1954 account (remastered by Pristine Classical) of Guido Cantelli conducting the same orchestra. The New York Philharmonic were still playing the *Berceuse* like the 'new' music that it was, from which Berg borrowed the rising and falling open fifths for the opening of his Violin Concerto, and which prompted Strauss (of all people) to remark in bewildered admiration at the orchestration of the last chord, 'How does he do it?'. (The stroke of a gong – not a tam-tam – against triply divided low violins, cellos and basses in unresolved fourths and fifths is the prosaic answer.)

The deep unease conjured by such a texture is explored in more harmonically radical terms in the Second Sonatina, Busoni's most innovative piano work. No time signature is marked and barlines are mostly conspicuous by their absence. Low, dense chords marked *Lento occulto* hang heavy in the air. Hamelin finds 'a complete disregard for any conventional harmonic language, invented from first note to last. He is looking into the future – but what future, I don't know.' It is the piece that brings Busoni closest to the Futurist movement led by Filippo Marinetti, who made a scene while defending the composer at the Sonatina's premiere in 1912. Around this time the affectionate friendship he had enjoyed for some years with an English pupil, Rosamond Ley, reached a crisis point, to judge from his letters: 'I meant to say [this is Busoni's English]: I think a man, who has gone through the absurdities of marriage *once*, must be more absurd than marriage itself, to try the thing again. A wife – a woman – can be all right, but never can be marriage so.' For all these Nietzsche-influenced paroxysms of dependent patriarchy, his own marriage to the Swedish pianist Gerda Sjöstrand survived; indeed it was Ley who produced the English translation (1938) of Busoni's letters to his wife.

As a pacifist Busoni settled in Switzerland during the First World War, while his pupils were scattered across the globe: 'Perhaps they are shooting at each other right now.' But an alternately acid and high-flown epistolary style need not obscure the generosity of a man who had sponsored and organised 12 concerts of new music in his adopted home of Berlin, where he became 'an antibody within the complacent ranks of the German musical establishment' (Peter Heyworth). The series began on November 8, 1902, with the Angel's Farewell from *The Dream of Gerontius* and continued over seven years to give local premieres of music by Debussy, Sibelius, Bartók and others. He was no less open to the creative minds of his composition students, who included Varèse and Weill.

In his *Outline* Busoni also rails against the limitations of major and minor: one of many paradoxes which surround him, given that more than any of his contemporaries he moved freely between the two moods of expression, sometimes bar by bar to the point of vacillation. When Varèse became determined to follow the *Outline*'s conclusion and do away with ▶

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Busoni (centre) with his composition students in c1922, including, far left, Kurt Weill

tonality, Busoni could remonstrate, with more practical experience than Schoenberg, that there was plenty of good music yet to be written in C major. In the *Indianisches Tagebuch* (1915) and tripartite Toccata (1920), Busoni mastered a technique combining contrapuntal elaboration with occult-influenced fantasy.

Behind that mastery lay a mindset and genius peculiar to its time that saw analysis, score-editing, transcription, improvisation and original invention not as separately defined skills but as points on the curve. Busoni found them all with what Hamelin identifies as 'a creative fidelity to the past, and betterment through recreation' that distinguishes his work from contemporaries such as Godowsky: 'He really did want to improve the originals. He wanted to impart his own vision of how they should go.' This was most evidently and awkwardly the case when Schoenberg sent him the second of the Op 11 piano pieces for approval, only to be disconcerted when Busoni then produced his own rearrangement, replete with octave doublings and conveniently 'pianistic' expansions of the carefully knotted harmony. 'It seems to me like correcting the crooked lines in a picture of Van Gogh's and replacing them with "correct" straight ones,' came the understandably affronted reply. Schoenberg's pupil René Leibowitz, however, analysed with superb clarity the process by which Busoni brought out the implied harmony of the Chaconne from Bach's D minor Partita, even when adding lines of his own, synthesising the piano styles of Liszt and Brahms which were his inheritance to justify all the liberties taken to understand the work at hand as a living organism (and this in the eyes of a stringent Modernist). 'He will remain for us,' concluded Leibowitz, 'a great interpreter and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.'

Disciples such as Petri and Ley talked of him in spiritual terms, as disciples are wont to do, though Busoni, baptised a Catholic, had only vestigial faith and was as fond of a glass of wine as the next man. The gossipy Zweig claimed he once encountered Busoni in a railway restaurant: 'He had drunk two bottles of wine by himself. "Narcotic!" he said, pointing at the bottles, "not drink! But there are times when one has to take a narcotic or one can't stand it." This was the Busoni of the later years, in reduced circumstances, preoccupied by *Doktor Faust*, encountered by Hans Gál: 'He was a tragic case... who never arrived at what he should have done; a great musician, full of self-reproach.'

Bored of giving concerts and seeing so much of his audiences, Busoni came to think less and less of them. 'The public neither knows nor wants to know,' he wrote, 'that in order to receive a work of art, half the work must be done by the recipient.' In

BUSONI ON RECORD

Busoni's aesthetic of the disappearing performer has been all too faithfully reflected by his presence on record. He made some piano rolls which his pupil Egon Petri attested were a travesty of his playing. His first acoustic session was at the London studio of Columbia Records in November 1919, but Busoni rejected all the takes and the discs were subsequently destroyed by fire. A return to the same studio in February 1922 is all we have, but, overall, it was not a positive experience for Busoni. 'The conditions are most unfavourable,' he wrote in a letter dated February 1, 1922. 'What in heaven's name can be the result of it? Not my own playing, take it for granted.'

Two live recordings of unarguable authority – the major piano works by Geoffrey Douglas Madge (Philips, 4/88) and the Concerto with Peter Donohoe (EMI, 1/91), captured at the Proms in 1988 – have never been reissued. The following selection, however, should communicate something of Busoni's influence and achievements.



'Busoni and His Legacy'

Piano recordings by Busoni, Ley and Petri

Arbiter

Busoni the pianist: the best transfer of those problematic acoustic sessions in 1922 coupled with rare recordings of his closest associates.

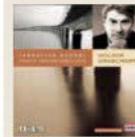


'The 1941 Commemorative Concert'

Indian Fantasy, Violin Concerto, Sarabande and Cortege, etc
Szigeti vn Petri pf NYPO / Mitropoulos

Music and Arts (nla but can be bought via Amazon)

The teacher and Svengali: two virtuosic concertos and his orchestral masterpiece from those who knew him well.



'Piano Transcriptions and Paraphrases'

JS Bach, Liszt, Mozart, Schoenberg, Offenbach, etc

Holger Groschopp pf

Capriccio ④

The editor, scholar and improver: performances which reflect Busoni's creative fidelity.



'Late Piano Music'

Marc-André Hamelin pf

Hyperion (11/13)

The composer's voice: from the wandering paths of the Elegies and Sonatinas through to the mystical Classicism perfected in the Klavierübung and the Chopin Variations.



'Doktor Faust'

Sols incl Henschel & Begley; Lyon Opera / Nagano

Warner (11/99)

The frustrated visionary: Nagano recorded the full text and the two completions, by Busoni's pupil Philipp Jarnach (in 1925) and the scholar Anthony Beaumont (in the 1980s).

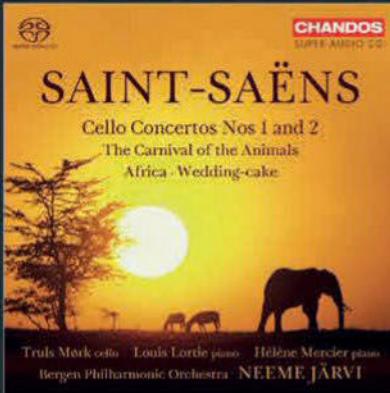
a fascinating act of (in)fidelity he once proposed to play the *Emperor Concerto* at *mezzo-forte* throughout. 'His students would say that he often played without any emotion at all, as if to himself,' says Madge. 'It was as if he disappeared behind the piano. And that's how I feel when I perform his works. You have to somehow not be there and get rid of yourself.' **❶**

January Releases

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SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



Saint-Saëns Cello Concertos The Carnival of the Animals / etc.

This unusual collection of popular works by Saint-Saëns features the two contrasted cello concertos, played by Truls Mørk, and works for piano such as *The Carnival of the Animals* with the indefatigable piano duo Louis Lortie/Hélène Mercier whose recent Poulenc recording was Disc of the Week in *The Sunday Times*.

CHSA 5162

Disc of the Month

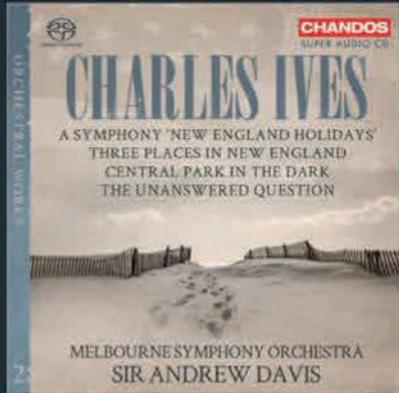
Mendelssohn in Birmingham, Vol. 4

Jennifer Pike/CBSO/Edward Gardner

Jennifer Pike, who made a remarkable debut at Carnegie Hall this year, performs Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor, the work that launched her career thirteen years ago when she became the youngest-ever BBC Young Musician of the Year. The album also includes the extended incidental music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, featuring the CBSO Youth Chorus and sopranos Rhian Lois and Keri Fuge.

CHSA 5161

SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



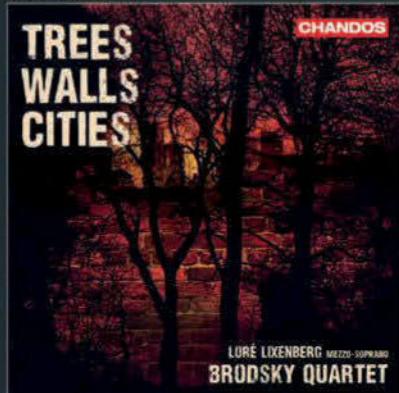
Ives Orchestral Works, Vol. 2

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
Sir Andrew Davis

Three Places in New England, one of Ives's first major works to receive long overdue attention, is performed here in its fully orchestrated version, along with *A Symphony: New England Holidays* and two short companion pieces. *Central Park in the Dark* and *The Unanswered Question*.

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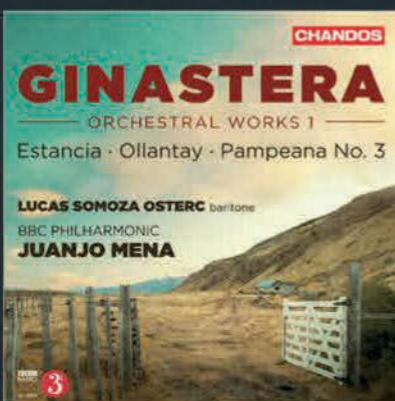


Trees, Walls, Cities

Loré Lixenberg/Brodsky Quartet

After a successful concert at 2013 City of London Festival, the Brodsky Quartet presents the premiere recording of this stunning song cycle. It links eight European cities in creative fellowship. The songs, by local composers setting locally written texts, are introduced and interlinked by material composed specifically for the purpose by the multi-linguist and international humanitarian Nigel Osborne.

CHAN 10883



Ginastera Estancia / Ollantay Pampeana No. 3

Following our ongoing, very successful Spanish music series, the BBC Philharmonic and its chief conductor, Juanjo Mena now explore works by the Argentinean composer Alberto Ginastera, a leading figure of his day, seen as one of the heroes of Latin-American music in general.

CHAN 10884



THE TWO SIDES OF *Henri Dutilleux*

As his hometown of Angers prepares to celebrate the centenary of his birth by naming a street after him, Dutilleux is being represented on disc by Pascal Rophé and his Loire orchestra – but in a rather different light to that of grand-scale symphonist, writes Gavin Dixon

There are no streets in France named after Henri Dutilleux,' laments conductor Pascal Rophé. The French take municipal honours seriously, so this is a major omission. But Rophé has the matter in hand. He has the support of the Mayor of Angers, the city in which Dutilleux was born in 1916. 'I was there two days ago,' the conductor says. 'They are looking for the right street now. It has to be a nice place...'

The centenary of Dutilleux's birth falls on January 22, and the street in Angers is just one of many tributes France will be paying. By the time of his death, in 2013, Dutilleux had become the most-performed living French composer in history. 'And he was much more than that,' says Rophé. 'He was the main connection in everything that happened from Berlioz to Boulez. The connection comes through in the very French quality of his music, the transparency, the detailed orchestration. And his feeling for harmony, this too is so French.'

Dutilleux was a perfectionist, labouring for years, even decades, over individual works. His music is usually on a large scale but with every nuance of texture, harmony and colour worked out in exquisite detail. His mastery of orchestration was demonstrated early on in his two symphonies of the 1950s. These set a course for a mature career devoted mainly to orchestral music. Among his best-known works are his three concertos (a cello concerto for Mstislav Rostropovich and violin concertos for Isaac Stern and Anne-Sophie Mutter), all masterpieces of melodic invention and orchestral colour. His music is always abstract but often teasingly suggests pictorial or narrative themes. Almost every work, including the concertos, has a poetic title, giving a clue to his inspiration. *Timbres, espace, mouvement* (1978), for example, is based on Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*, the painting's colours and mood subtly translated into sound. Deep philosophical themes also run through Dutilleux's work. In *The Shadows of Time*, Dutilleux

offers a Proustian contemplation of the passing years, of regret and loss. The work evokes the Holocaust but in Dutilleux's typically abstract terms, with three children's voices joining the orchestra to intone the phrase 'Pourquoi nous?' (Why us?).

These, and a handful of other pieces, make up the whole of Dutilleux's mature output. His is a big reputation resting on a small repertoire, most of which will be performed extensively in this anniversary year. Taken together, it presents a unified image: the composer as methodical perfectionist, dedicated to the highest artistic ideals, drawing on ideas from many sources but refining them into music of highly abstract expression.

Now Pascal Rophé is keen to show us another side to Dutilleux. His new BIS recording, with the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, explores the composer's earlier music. Working with Pierre Gervasoni, a Dutilleux expert whose official biography is also appearing during the anniversary year, Rophé has assembled a programme of works from the 1940s and '50s that present the composer in a different light. A big change occurred in Dutilleux's life in the early 1960s. Up until then he had worked as a music producer for Radio France. Without the luxury of time, he had not yet adopted the slow, meticulous pace that characterised his mature work. His earlier compositions were written more swiftly, and often to more practical ends, for the stage and for cinema. *Le loup*, the ballet that forms the core of Rophé's programme, was written in 1953 in just four weeks.

Towards the end of his life, now satisfied with his symphonies and concertos, he decided to return to the voice – Pascal Rophé

'This is Dutilleux before Dutilleux,' says Rophé. 'That is what is so exciting about this project. It was Dutilleux before he chose to be a "serious" composer, and to write only pure music.' The ballet music here is more impulsive than the Dutilleux we know, more rhythmic and with a strong feeling of propulsion. Yet Dutilleux's feeling for orchestral colour is also evident, with sophisticated textures evoked through often surprising instrumental combinations. As Gervasoni points out, there are two ways of hearing *Le loup*. This was Dutilleux's first ballet score, and the collaborative nature of the project, working with designers, a choreographer (Roland Petit) and, of course, the dancers, appealed to his social side. *Le loup* was widely performed and its success led Dutilleux on to four more ballet projects, and requests for many more. On the other hand, the work stands on its own musical merits, both for its continual invention and for its internal coherence. Chronologically, it comes midway between the two symphonies, an important step in Dutilleux's development as a symphonic composer.

Rophé and Gervasoni see the recording project giving context to the later orchestral scores for which Dutilleux is best known. But they also hope that it will broaden our view of the composer by demonstrating his early successes in other genres. The disc also includes music from Dutilleux's first film score, *La fille du Diable*. Gervasoni has had to reconstruct the score and parts, but he has been aided throughout by the composer's attention to detail, the surviving materials all clear, organised and precise.

The disc concludes with two sets of *mélodies*. The first, *Quatre Mélodies pour voix et orchestre*, was written in 1941–42, and although the version with piano accompaniment has previously been recorded, this will be the first time Dutilleux's orchestral settings have appeared on disc. The second cycle sets

three sonnets by Jean Cassou, the third setting also a world-premiere recording. Cassou was a fighter in the French resistance and the sonnets that Dutilleux sets were all written when he was a prisoner of war. Clandestine publications of the sonnets appeared in 1944 and Dutilleux's settings a decade later. As with *Le loup*, the music here looks forward to the composer's distinctive later style. The harmonies have a stronger grounding in tonality yet are continually adventurous, always bringing subtle changes to the mood and colour. Both sets were originally written for Charles Panzéra and are sung here by baritone Vincent Le Texier. The composer's connection with Panzéra dated back to 1938, when the baritone sang the cycle *Chanson au bord de la mer*, for which Dutilleux won the Prix de Rome, the first great milestone in his career. 'It is important to show that Dutilleux was not only

a symphonist,' says Gervasoni. 'He was always interested in the voice as well. Towards the end of his life, now satisfied with his symphonies and concertos, he decided to return to the voice. It had always been his main instrument.'

The first fruit of this renewed interest was the orchestral version of the Cassou settings, which previously had only piano accompaniment. The orchestral version, which appears on this recording, was made in the mid-1990s. This was followed by two major orchestral song-cycles, *Correspondances* (2003) for Dawn Upshaw and *Le temps l'horloge* (2007–09) for Renée Fleming. At the end of his career Dutilleux was returning to these *mélodies*, re-examining them and picking up where they left off.

Pascal Rophé and the Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire are an ideal team for Dutilleux. Rophé conducts a broad repertoire but is particularly known for his advocacy of modern French music. He worked closely with Dutilleux on many performances in the composer's later years. 'He was a very self-effacing man,' Rophé remembers, 'so shy. He was such a simple person. But he could be really demanding. When you



Dutilleux with Sir Simon Rattle at the 2006 Salzburg Festival

had him in rehearsal behind you, you really knew about it.' Rophé has been Musical Director of the Loire orchestra since September 2014 and his concert programming with these players mixes old and new. There is a strong local connection for Dutilleux as well. His birthplace of Angers is the second city of the Loire region and, along with Nantes (where the new recording was made), is one of the orchestra's two homes. Dutilleux often visited the Loire region, and the river itself was a strong influence on his work. As well as the naming of a street in his honour, Angers will also host a Dutilleux-based dance event in 2016. Rophé and the orchestra will work with the Angers-based Centre National de Danse Contemporaine and its Director Robert Swinston on a project to choreograph Dutilleux's music.

Further afield, Rophé will be marking the anniversary with a Dutilleux-themed concert with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales on January 27 in Cardiff and an all-Dutilleux programme with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London on April 30. He will also lead Dutilleux performances with the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo.

International celebrations, then, for a composer of global stature. In fact, Dutilleux's music has always been more acclaimed abroad than in his homeland. From the 1960s onwards, Dutilleux's reputation rested largely on premieres and high-profile performances in the UK and US, where he won the powerful advocacy of conductors including George Szell, Seiji Ozawa, Kurt Masur and Simon Rattle. Time, perhaps, for France to re-appropriate Dutilleux? Not necessary, says Rophé; he is a composer whose reputation already transcends his origins. 'Dutilleux is a world composer, one of the great musicians of his time. The fact that he was French is clear from the style of his music, and of course a country should be proud of what it has produced. But Dutilleux is not just a French phenomenon – his genius is universal.' **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Rophé's Dutilleux disc, see page 34



Dutilleux with André Previn and Anne-Sophie Mutter, dedicatee of *Du même accord*



Pascal Rophé, who has been Musical Director of the Loire orchestra since 2014



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Photo Ranald Mackenzie

barbican

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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Harriet Smith welcomes a new recording of Beethoven's cello-and-piano works – sublime music, brilliantly played by this French duo



Beethoven

'Complete Works for Cello & Piano'

Xavier Phillips vc François-Frédéric Guy pf

Evidence M ② EVCDO15 (128' • DDD)

This is the third instalment in François-Frédéric Guy's traversal of Beethoven and the first to delve into the chamber music. He is well matched in intellect, musicianship and temperament by cellist Xavier Phillips as they journey from the ridiculous (the Variations on 'See the Conqu'ring Hero Comes', in which Guy dispatches the virtuoso piano part with complete aplomb, to delectable effect) to the sublime (the Op 102 Sonatas). The two sets of variations on themes from Mozart's *Magic Flute* are a very different proposition from the 'Conqu'ring Hero' but just as persuasive, with the Op 66 set given a particularly sparkling reading.

Competition is of course thick on the ground, not least from Isserlis and Levin (playing a tremendously characterful McNulty fortepiano), which was an obvious choice for Record of the Month in February 2014. But Phillips and Guy deserve that accolade just as richly and their utterly different sound world is equally riveting.

From the same year as the 'Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen' Variations come the two Op 5 Sonatas with which Beethoven embraced the genre of sonata for piano and cello for the first time. In the opening *Adagio sostenuto* of Op 5 No 1, Phillips and Guy conjure up the sense of a genre being formed before your very ears. Compelling too is their reactivity, Guy never stealing the limelight from Phillips, though it would be easy to do so, particularly in the first two sonatas, in which the



In the First Sonata, Xavier Phillips and François-Frédéric Guy conjure up the sense of a genre being formed before your ears



piano's role is more overtly brilliant. The First Sonata's Rondo is a highlight, with a real one-in-a-bar swing, the minor touches given due prominence. By comparison, both Müller-Schott/Hewitt and Qin/Tiu sound too well behaved; Isserlis and Levin are also a degree steadier but they offset this with some fantastically imaginative keyboard colours. But when it comes to judging the final moments, with the gentle 'dissolve' into a meditative mood that is then boisterously cast aside, Guy and Phillips are unassailable. The finale of Op 5 No 2 also has a wonderful elasticity, combining mischievousness with ardent tenderness as Beethoven demands. We're made acutely aware of the different air breathed in each sonata. Phillips imbues the opening of Op 69 with a confiding quality that is just right: Müller-Schott is a tad more tentative, though both have a songful beauty of tone in their upper registers. In the same

work's *Scherzo*, incidentally, Guy chooses (like Hewitt) not to repeat the tied notes where Beethoven marks a change of fingering, a feature which both Levin and Tiu observe.

One of the finest aspects of this new set is a sense of absolute rightness about each of the tempi chosen. The slow movement of Op 69, for instance, possesses a natural songfulness alongside which Müller-Schott/Hewitt and Qin/Tiu sound somewhat effortful; this contrasts splendidly with an ebulliently quick finale, neither player ever sounding puffed. The C major Sonata, Op 102 No 1, is just as impressive: it unfolds with a sense of total inevitability, its frequently gnarly world view convincingly conveyed, while the brief *Adagio* has a prayerful intensity.



Compelling reactivity: Phillips and Guy recording Beethoven's cello sonatas and variations

And if you want to sample the seamless responsiveness of this partnership, just listen to the opening of Op 102 No 2, with its quicksilver changes of mood, from gruff good humour to elegant yearning and then back again to a kind of tart playfulness. The development, in which Beethoven conducts outlandish experiments on the briefest of motifs, is again judged to a nicety – Phillips's deep *sforzato* accents slicing through the texture without becoming aggressive.

There follows one of Beethoven's great late slow movements. Phillips and Guy shape its arching, aching lines with great intensity. Isserlis and Levin are a tad faster and the cellist's use of vibrato only as an expressive effect is very striking. The test point with this *Adagio* is the *espressivo* melody introduced by piano and then joined by cello.

Too slow and it sags like perished elastic, but not in the hands of Phillips and Guy (disc 2, tr 7, 0'56"). But then turn to du Pré and Barenboim and you find something more miraculous still: at a recklessly spacious tempo they turn it into a profoundly moving prayer. The close of the movement, a Beethovenian question mark, is answered by a fugal finale which in this new version has wondrous airiness and energy without trenchancy. It's a recording that brings this sublime music into your living room in the most natural manner possible, and I can't wait for Vol 4 of the series. Terrific! **G**

Selected comparisons:

Du Pré, Barenboim (5/76^k) (EMI) 586242-2

Müller-Schott, Hewitt (12/08, 5/10) (HYPE) CDA67633/67755

Qin, Tiu (11/11) (DECC) 889 9119

Isserlis, Levin (2/14) (HYPE) CDA67981/2

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue



Orchestral



Richard Osborne watches Franz Welser-Möst's Brahms on DVD:

'He remains an enigma; and it's an enigma we have plenty of time to ponder during the six and a half hours' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 28**



Harriet Smith listens to Jan Lisiecki's Schumann Concerto:

'There's tremendous maturity in terms of the sweep of the opening movement, coupled with an infectious glee' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**

WF Bach

Keyboard Concertos - Falck41; Falck43; Falck45. Sinfonia, Falck67. Allegro e forte, Falck43

Il Convito / Maude Gratton hpd
Mirare ℗ MIR162 (74' • DDD)



Bach's eldest son, for whom the weight of his father's inheritance – emotionally and otherwise – contributed to his dispersing the chattels to mitigate his famously precarious professional existence, finds glistening and characterful advocacy here in Maude Gratton's brilliantly projected recital with her one-to-a-part string group, Il Convito. WF Bach often comes with a staple diet of reputational baggage (before one hears a note), but this programme challenges the notion that only the solo keyboard vignettes deserve a place in the repertoire.

From the beginning of the melancholic questing of the A minor Harpsichord Concerto to the highly wrought push-pullyu of the significant E minor work, a riveting concentration of harmonic and textural detail emerges. It's a style that sails a course straight between his father's motivic tautness and the dissenting *galant* of his peers, and it finds its best expression in the framing works, from his early and late periods (c1730 and 1770).

What Gratton and Il Convito convey so persuasively in their assuaging and elegant performances is that, beyond Wilhelm Friedemann's capricious figures, mental robustness and vulnerability cohabit as a kind of conceit. This is perfectly exemplified in the knotty Sinfonia, acting as one of two diverting links between the concertos: JSB's muscularity at once yields to the fickle asides of CPE Bach but with Wilhelm Friedemann adding a dose of studied instability.

Whether it's really all conceit or part-autobiography, the WFB experience is rarely relaxing. The layering of filigree, which doubtless encouraged Carl Zelter,

Mendelssohn's teacher, to judge his music as 'petty and fussy', is handled with exceptional sangfroid by Gratton and her colleagues, letting the music speak openly in her engaging and unforced solo playing, with the dark-hued strings responsive and mainly in tune.

Something never quite adds up in WF Bach. Paradoxically, intelligent recognition of this by performers leads to an idiosyncratic flair which is well worth exploring. Most beguiling is the little Minuet from the Sinfonia: a vignette, unsurprisingly. This is a release that tells us a little bit more about this talented but awkward offspring of a very great father.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Beethoven

Symphonies - No 2, Op 36; No 7, Op 92

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Karl Böhm

Orfeo ℗ C910 151B (80' • AAD)

Recorded live at the Salzburg Festival,

August 17, 1980



It's unusual, if not unwelcome, to find a company including a cartoon of one of its conductors in a CD booklet. After all, there are a lot to choose from. In this present Orfeo release the elderly Karl Böhm is portrayed as a tortoise. Standing on his hind legs, his shell doing service for a tailcoat, the old boy is caught in one of his more characteristic poses, baton brandished above his head. The tortoise reference is not to the 86-year-old's tempi – though there are some in the Seventh Symphony which might invite the comparison – but to his longevity. 'You'll probably make 300' is the cartoon's caption. In fact, this was Böhm's penultimate concert at the Salzburg Festival, where he had been a quiet but commanding presence for more than 30 years. He died the following year during the 1981 festival.

The longevity of certain celebrated conductors has given rise to the idea that

this is a breed that gets better with age. Alas, that's far from the case. In some instances the clock starts to run down all too alarmingly. Not that this was entirely true of Böhm. At a ceremony marking his 80th birthday in Salzburg in 1974, he was presented with a clock as a mark of respect for what Herbert von Karajan described as 'this faultless timekeeper'. Six years on from that presentation, Böhm's famously light and springy beat seems to have been in pretty good shape in what is a shrewdly paced yet affectionate account of Beethoven's Second Symphony.

Sadly the Seventh Symphony is another matter altogether. If there are signs of the energy levels dropping in the finale of the Second Symphony, the Seventh never really gets off the ground, despite what are clearly Herculean efforts by the Vienna Philharmonic. The more laboured the finale becomes, the louder the trumpets play, which leads one to imagine that a fair few steins of Salzburger Stiegl must have been sunk after the concert. Not that the famously parsimonious Böhm would have been paying.

Richard Osborne

Berg · Beethoven · Fuchs · Joachim

Beethoven Romance, Op 50^a Berg Violin

Concerto^a Fuchs Nine Fantasy Pieces^b

Joachim Hebrew Melodies^c

Pinchas Zukerman abvn/cva bc Marc Neikrug pf

London Philharmonic Orchestra / Zubin Mehta

Biddulph ℗ ② 80251-2 (89' • DDD)

Recorded ^b1992, ^c1994, ^a1995



No explanation is offered in the booklet for the belated release of these recordings from the early 1990s and perhaps none is needed, for Zukerman's soaring sense of line and golden tone are ample justifications in themselves, more



'Assuaging and elegant performances': Maude Gratton offers works by WF Bach on her new disc with Il Convito on Mirare

eloquent than any guarded tale of record-company politics. Beethoven's F major Romance is inflated to Brahmsian dimensions by a plushly upholstered accompaniment from what sounds like a full-strength London Philharmonic: its gently rolling momentum is more peaceably maintained by Zukerman's earlier recording (Philips, 11/87) where he directs the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra from the violin.

The sharp contours of Berg's Concerto are not so much ironed out as rounded off by Zukerman, with Mehta an observant and willing accomplice; so too the CBS engineers, who tuck the more Expressionist details of Berg's orchestration away, if not out of hearing then out of mind. Intimacy and violence are both in short supply. You would be hard-pressed to grasp even from what should be the explosive start to the second part that the concerto is the instrumental sister to *Lulu* rather than *Das Lied von der Erde*; it often rewards a balance struck between Romantically inclined soloist and incisive conductor, and again Zukerman's earlier recording (this time with Pierre Boulez – CBS/Sony, 10/86) provides the model of a beating heart within a glinting suit of armour.

The second disc has more to offer. Brahms is in the room again, this time not as uninvited guest but welcome host to recital works with a charm as unaffected as Zukerman's *portamento*. The central section of Robert Fuchs's Op 82 No 1 is unthinkable without the examples of Brahms's vocal and instrumental *Regenlieder*, and if the remaining *Fantasiestücke* of this selection are hardly less indebted, especially in the harmony of their piano parts, to the master's Hungarian dances, intermezzos and so on, they are written from the inside out, never a moment too long, and caught on the wing here not only by Zukerman's unfailing *cantabile* but also by Marc Neikrug's alertly sprung accompaniments.

The 24-year-old Joachim had met Brahms for the first time only two years before writing these *Hebrew Melodies*, which sing with a personal if rather unrelieved contralto. Zukerman and his viola are placed further from the microphones than his violin in the Fuchs, and he is slower, especially in No 3, than any other comparative version, but uses the space to advantage. No 2 is in C minor, marked *Grave*, but a true *Nigun* in all but name.

Peter Quantrill

Brahms • Bartók



Bartók Violin Concerto No 1, Sz36^a

Brahms Violin Concerto, Op 77^b

Janine Jansen vn ^aLondon Symphony Orchestra;

^bOrchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Sir Antonio Pappano

Decca 478 8412DH (59' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at Santa Cecilia Hall, Rome, February 21, 23 & 24, 2015

Brahms

Violin Concerto, Op 77^a. String Quintet No 2, Op 111^b

Antje Weithaas v/t Camerata Bern

AVI Music AVI8553328 (68' • DDD)

Recorded live at ^aKulturcasino, Bern,

^bRadio studio, Zurich, December 2014



On record at least, Brahms's two piano concertos have long been a largely male preserve. Not so the Violin Concerto, some of whose most persuasive interpreters – from Ginette Neveu in the 1940s to Janine Jansen on this latest recording – have been women. Antje Weithaas might also be thought worthy of a place in the pantheon

were it not for her bizarre decision to record the concerto without a conductor.

Janine Jansen gives us a lyric reading of rare inwardness and beauty. Such is the tenderness of her playing and the fineness with which she delineates solo lines over which Brahms has strewn words such as *lusingando* and *leggiero ed espressivo* (*grazioso*), you might think her performance too much resembles Keats's 'still unravished bride of quietness'. In fact, it is a performance that marries meditation with motion, such is the suppleness of Jansen's and Pappano's feel for the concerto's larger symphonic movement and the hand-in-glove relationship that exists between soloist, conductor and Pappano's superbly responsive Santa Cecilia orchestra.

It is Weithaas's conductorless performance which repeatedly threatens to come to a standstill. What's more, for all the ravishment of her playing, Jansen never threatens to hog the limelight, whereas the conductorless performance, in its very nature perhaps, too often sounds like a sonata for solo violin to which an orchestra has been unaccountably added.

Jansen and Pappano continue their persuasive ways in the *Adagio*, which is lovingly realised at not too slow a tempo. After which they plausibly opt for an essentially jocund way with the Hungarian finale, avoiding that darker element in the music – what Malcolm MacDonald has called its 'curious earthy stateliness' – that you will hear in Anne-Sophie Mutter's epic 1981 recording with Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. Thirty years on, the 18-year-old Mutter's performance still has the power to move and astonish, though its grander manner makes it more a complement to Jansen's approach than a rival. Both soloists play the cadenza by Joseph Joachim, Brahms's close collaborator on the work.

Jansen's coupling is shrewd and imaginative. Brahms originally planned his concerto as a four-movement piece. Add to his completed three movements the two-movement Bartók fragment and you have a five-movement work which continues to mingle lovelorn reveries with Hungarian high jinks of the highest order. It's an inspired pairing.

I find it remarkable that the Rome recording of the Brahms is live, so rapt is the atmosphere, so inch-perfect the recorded balances. There are a couple of things which might have been fixed in the Walthamstow studio recording of the Bartók but in the great scheme of things they are neither here nor there. If it was a straight choice for the Bartók I would still reckon Kyung Wha Chung's 1983

Chicago recording with the matchless Georg Solti to be *bors concours*. But Jansen's performance is a thing of quality in its own right which provides a strikingly original epilogue to an outstanding disc.

Weithaas's coupling is similarly inspired, since it was at Joachim's request that Brahms wrote his late, great String Quintet, Op 111, another work that mingles heroic imaginings with Hungarian high jinks. Once again Weithaas has an 'angle', but this time it works. Originally scored for two violins, two violas and cello, the quintet has been newly recast by Weithaas and a colleague for eight violins, six violas, two cellos and double bass. Would Brahms have approved? I can't think he wouldn't have, given the superb quality of this Bern performance. The Brahms-loving Arnold Schoenberg did something similar with *Verklärte Nacht*. What this rescored version also reminds me of at times is Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro*. Now there's something to ponder.

Richard Osborne

Brahms Violin Concerto – selected comparison:
Mutter, BPO, Karajan (7/82⁸) (DG) 439 007-2GHS
Bartók – selected comparison:
Chung, Chicago SO, Solti (10/84⁸) (DECC) 473 271-2DF2

Brahms



Symphonies – No 1, Op 68; No 2, Op 73; No 3, Op 90; No 4, Op 98. Academic Festival Overture, Op 80. Tragic Overture, Op 81. Variations on a Theme by Haydn, 'St Antoni Chorale', Op 56a. Violin Concerto, Op 77^a. Piano Concertos^b – No 1, Op 15; No 2, Op 83

^aJulia Fischer vn ^bYefim Bronfman pf

The Cleveland Orchestra / Franz Welser-Möst

Belvedere \textcircled{F} $\textcircled{3}$ DVD BVD08005;
 \textcircled{F} $\textcircled{3}$ BVD08009 (5h 41' + 48' • NTSC •
16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTSS.1 & PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live January 2014 – February 2015

Bonuses include Julia Fischer and Yefim Bronfman in conversation with Franz Welser-Möst



In the heyday of George Szell's tenure as its chief conductor, The Cleveland Orchestra had few if any peers among the world's great orchestras. That it remains one of Western music's classier acts is due in part to that heritage, in part to the quietly effective curatorships of Christoph von Dohnányi (1984–2002) and Franz Welser-Möst, who will have completed 20 years with the orchestra when his current residency ends in 2022. Yet Welser-Möst himself remains something of an enigma; and it's an enigma we have plenty of time to ponder during the six and a half hours

of video footage that make up this extended Brahms edition, filmed live at home in Cleveland and on tour in London and Vienna in 2014–15.

Now in his mid-fifties, Welser-Möst's podium manner remains that of a shy but dutiful conservatoire student: the immaculately executed beat, the largely redundant left hand, the frequent furtive glances at the printed score, the somewhat marionette-like stance. What matters, of course, is what goes on in rehearsal, and the exemplary levels of concentration generated in performance by his superlative musicians. When a Viennese critic writes of two of these Brahms performances 'glowing from within', something must be going right. As indeed it is in what is a lyrical and in the end surprisingly fiery account of the Second Symphony.

There is also much to be said for Welser-Möst's Boult-like circumspection in the First Symphony. I have long felt uneasy about Brahms cycles in which the First Symphony explodes on to the scene like some musical King Kong. Welser-Möst's creature is fleeter of foot and a good deal less threatening. 'Beethoven's Tenth', folk used to joke. What Welser-Möst gives us is more like Schumann's Fifth.

It is in the slow movements and the fluidly realised third-movement intermezzos that Welser-Möst's readings give the greatest pleasure. Which may explain why the First Symphony, with its *scherzo*-like first movement and loosely evolved finale, works, where his account of the tragic Fourth Symphony – here more a jaunt than a journey – self-evidently fails.

His account of the Third Symphony is also sadly underpowered. You could put this down to the prissily disengaged nature of the beat. (Who was it – Furtwängler, Boult? – who said there is no more difficult symphony to start, such is the orchestral mass which has to be hoisted aloft.) But I suspect that's only part of the story. Compare this performance with Szell's 1964 Cleveland recording (Columbia, 8/65 – nla) and, though Welser-Möst's tempi are generally quicker, they seem slower because the rhythms are less tautly drawn, less powerfully energised from within.

Welser-Möst often seems more energised – and more completely himself – when there is a soloist to hand. Julia Fischer delivers a richly concentrated account of the Violin Concerto, finely accompanied, and Yefim Bronfman is a solidly reassuring presence in the two piano concertos. Again, slow movements are a highlight, not to mention a beautifully articulated account of the B flat Concerto's skittish and all-too-elusive finale. Only in the finale of the D minor Concerto



Complete Brahms from Cleveland: Franz Welser-Möst conducts the symphonies and concertos on DVD

does the music-making take on an uncharacteristically dishevelled air, as spur-of-the-moment excitement takes hold.

As to the set's technical qualities, the BBC's Proms relay of the First Symphony is in a class of its own, superior in sound quality to that achieved in the Second and Third Symphonies recorded in Vienna's Musikverein by the French Mezzo channel, and superior to most of the home-grown footage generated by Cleveland's local provider, WVIZ/PBS ideastream. In the piano concertos, it is the Cleveland team's inconsistent and occasionally eccentric video direction that is the problem; in the violin concerto it is the closeness with which Julia Fischer's admittedly riveting playing has been recorded. As for Welser-Möst's daring emphasis on the crepuscular colours in which Brahms dresses the theme of his *St Antoni Variations* (oboes pitted against bassoons, contrabassoon, low horns, cellos and double basses), this is completely missed by the video director.

The DVD booklets are none too thorough either. They lack movement timings and are silent on such matters as the identity of the cadenza used by Julia Fischer in the Violin Concerto. In case you are wondering, it is the Joachim. **Richard Osborne**

Bruch

'The Romantic Violin Concerto, Vol 19'
Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26. Romance, Op 42.
Serenade, Op 75
Jack Liebeck vn BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins
Hyperion © CDA68060 (72' • DDD)



One couldn't help wondering, when Jack Liebeck launched his exploration of Bruch's violin works last year, why he began with the Third Concerto. It was an uphill struggle, with Liebeck attempting to convince us that this is more interesting music than it is. Still, it was a worthy project, for completeness's sake, showcasing an approach as fresh as we have come to expect from this violinist.

It's an approach that pays dividends in this latest recording, which unites Liebeck with Bruch's evergreen Concerto No 1. No sign here of nanny-goat vibrato or the banana-skin slides that mar Daniel Hope's otherwise well-judged recording. No, what Liebeck seems to be saying is that Bruch needs no additional sweeteners. His playing is unpretentious

and strikingly introspective, resulting in an *Adagio* of quiet dignity. And even if the first movement doesn't quite match the grandeur of Julia Fischer's or the sweaty passion of Vadim Gluzman's, it stands out for its poise and clarity.

The rest of the programme profiles lesser-known fodder. Lesser known for good reason, because neither the Romance in A minor nor the four-movement Serenade in A minor can compete with the First Concerto for nuance and emotional depth, let alone memorable tunes. Nonetheless, they draw urgent, vibrant playing from Liebeck, who embraces every opportunity for contrast. And it says much for the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and conductor Martyn Brabbins that they sound, throughout, as though genuinely enamoured of this music. **Hannah Nepil**

Violin Concerto No 1 – selected comparisons:

Hope (5/11) (DG) 477 9301GH
Gluzman (8/11) (BIS) BIS-SACD1852
Fischer (6/13) (DECC) 478 3544DH

Copland

Billy the Kid. An Outdoor Overture.
Rodeo. El Salón México
Colorado Symphony Orchestra / Andrew Litton
BIS © BIS2164 (77' • DDD/DSD)

Bruch

Violin Concerto No 1, Op 26
Romance, Op 42
Serenade, Op 75

JACK LIEBECK

BBC SCOTTISH
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MARTYN BRABBINS



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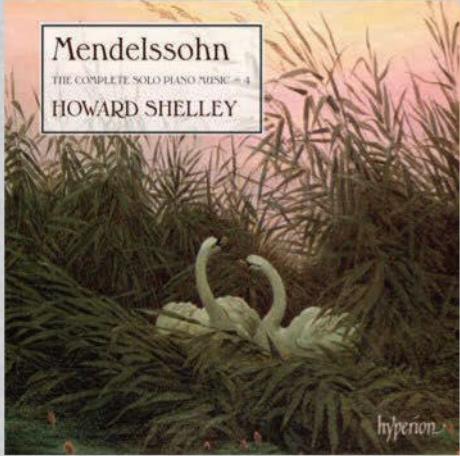
Ein einziges, ein klar
Gib Leben oder Tod
Nur dein Gefühl enthülle,
wahres!
Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-1875)
Translation:
Never to go to you again,
So I decided and so I vowed,

Brahms: Lieder und Gesänge, Op 32 - 2: Nicht
-0:45
Stridge, Graham Johnson — Brahms: The Complete Songs

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Piano Concerto No 7 in E minor 'Grand concerto militaire'



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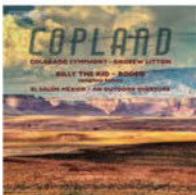
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Andrew Litton and the Colorado Symphony Orchestra offer a useful collection of Copland's ballet scores



El Salón México wears well. It made a vivid impression at the ISCM Festival in London in 1938 and brought Copland wider fame and a publisher. Its tunes, as well as those in *Billy the Kid* and *Rodeo*, are mostly borrowed but of course brilliantly arranged in Copland's instantly identifiable settings. His own recording of *El Salón* from the 1970s are both rhythmically tight and straight but Litton waxes slightly sentimental when the violins have the first lyrical melody. Further, the repetitive clarinet solo close to the end adds smears not in the score or the earlier performances. The same thing happens in the clarinet solos in the Ranch House Party in *Rodeo*, and there are trombone slides elsewhere. I don't think Copland would have minded.

The two ballets here have been enormously influential and widely recorded, if not as ubiquitous as they used to be. These are the complete scores. However, they may be more effective as suites rather than the full ballet scores, although the complete *Rodeo* gives us

Andrew Litton himself as a convincing honky-tonk pianist. Tempi in most modern recordings are slightly faster, a bit more driven than Copland's own choices, but that's how things are these days. *The Outdoor Overture*, written for a high-school orchestra – they must have been good – stems from the same pre-war period and is in Copland's best optimistic vein. Overall, these lively performances make a useful collection.

Peter Dickinson

Debussy · Fauré · Ravel

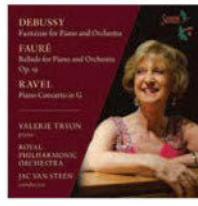
Debussy *Fantaisie Fauré Ballade*, Op 19

Ravel *Piano Concerto in G*

Valerie Tryon *pf*

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Jac van Steen

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0258 (63' • DDD)



For her third Somm recording, Valerie Tryon turns to France, doubtless recalling her early studies in Paris with Jacques Février. And if the times are past when she tossed aside the difficulties of such daunting fare as Balakirev's *Islamey* and Liszt's *Feux follets* with nonchalant

ease, she retains much of her impeccable musicianship, her grace and fluency.

Debussy, who could take a pensive view of his own as well as other people's music, was dismissive concerning his *Fantaisie*, yet its intricate and scintillating interplay between piano and orchestra, with an intriguing hint of 'Fêtes' from the orchestral *Nocturnes*, makes for a special sense of pastoral enchantment. And here Tryon is as warmly sympathetic as she is delightfully frisky in the final *Allegro molto*'s opening.

Her Fauré is subtly rather than boldly inflected and as on so many other occasions she makes it hard to imagine playing less interventionist or more unassuming. At the same time, her way with Fauré's shimmering, bird-haunted landscape can be sober to the point of plainness and her Ravel Concerto, too, is what painters call 'low in tone', with a notably subfusc view of the very Spanish flavours of the first movement's second subject.

And yet, if you need to look elsewhere for a more fiercely projected and volatile view of all three works (Gieseking in the Debussy, Louis Lortie in the Fauré and most of all Argerich in the Ravel, to say nothing of youthful Benjamin Grosvenor), ►

GRAMOPHONE

Editor's Choice



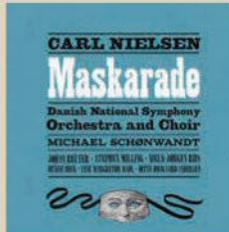
Every issue, Gramophone's Editor's Choices highlight the most exciting and important new releases. Explore here a selection of the most thrilling music-making of the past six months



BEETHOVEN
Piano Concerto No 3
Maria João Pires pf
Orchestra of the 18th
Century / Frans Brüggen
Fryderyk Chopin
Institute
F DVD NIFCDVD005

An enjoyable opportunity to watch one of today's finest pianists playing on a beautifully restored historic instrument – a Erard piano from 1849.

► REVIEWED IN JULY 2015



CARL NIELSEN
Maskarade
Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Choir
MICHAEL SCHÖNWANDT
Mikael Schønwandt
Dacapo F 2 80000
6 220641/2

Nielsen's anniversary year invited us to reassess the composer with new recordings, in this case a fourth – and successful – outing on disc for *Maskarade*.

► REVIEWED IN AUGUST 2015



'MORGEN!'
Michaela Schuster
mez Markus
Schlemmer pf
Oehms F OC1833
In this emotionally varied

programme, mezzo Michaela Schuster draws on her experience of the dramatic stage to offer many moving interpretations of well-chosen songs.

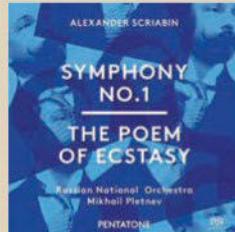
► REVIEWED IN SEPTEMBER 2015



JS BACH
'Bach in
Montecassino'
Luca Guglielmi org
Vivat F VIVAT108
A true
recognition of
Bach's genius

took some time, but these works were circulating shortly after his death and are here wonderfully played on an organ of the era.

► REVIEWED IN AUGUST 2015



ALEXANDER SCRIBBIN
SYMPHONY NO.1
THE POEM OF ECSTASY
Russian National Orchestra
Mikhail Pletnev
Pentatone F 5186 514

The Scriabin centenary year offers an excellent chance to reassess the composer's creativity: this is a fine contribution to that endeavour.

► REVIEWED IN AUGUST 2015



PUUMALA
Anna Liisa
Sols; Tapiola
Sinfonietta / Jan
Söderblom
Ondine F 2 80000
ODE1254-2D
A fairly

unfamiliar name to *Gramophone's* pages – but perhaps that will change following this superb performance of Finnish composer Veli-Matti Puumala's powerful opera.

► REVIEWED IN SEPTEMBER 2015



BRUCKNER
Symphony No 1
Netherlands Radio
Philharmonic
Orchestra / Jaap
van Zweden
Challenge Classics
F CC72556

Jaap van Zweden completes his journey through Bruckner's symphonies with a richly detailed, passionately played performance of the First.

► REVIEWED IN AUGUST 2015



KA HARTMANN.
SHOSTAKOVICH.
WEINBERG
'Wartime
Consolations'
Linus Roth vn
Württemberg
Chamber

Orchestra / Ruben Gazarian

Challenge Classics F CC72680

Linus Roth offers another compelling disc of 20th-century music.

► REVIEWED IN SEPTEMBER 2015

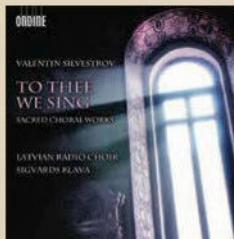


SAINT-SAËNS
Symphony No 3,
'Organ'
Jan Kraybill org
Kansas City
Symphony
Orchestra / Michael
Stern

Reference Recordings F RR136

Another fine issue from Reference Recordings, a label with a strong audiophile pedigree and increasingly regular recipients of Editor's Choices.

► REVIEWED IN SEPTEMBER 2015

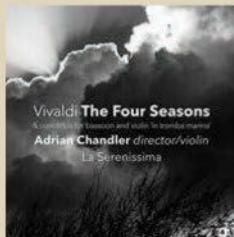


SILVESTROV
'To Thee We Sing'
Latvian Radio Choir
/ Sigvards Kjava

Ondine ODE1266-5
An absorbing,
immersive choral

experience for both the singers, one confidently assumes, and certainly for the listener, from an impressive choir.

► REVIEWED IN OCTOBER 2015



VIVALDI
The Four Seasons
La Serenissima /
Adrian Chandler vn
Avie AV2344
To become
another
Four Seasons

recommendation takes something special, and this absolutely is. Imaginative and thrillingly dramatic playing throughout.

► REVIEWED IN OCTOBER 2015

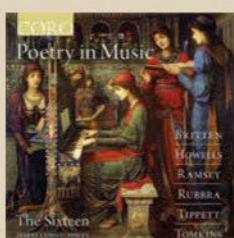


ROSSINI
Aureliano in Palmira
Sols; Chorus of the
Teatro Comunale,
Bologna; Giuseppe
Rossini SO /
Will Crutchfield
ArtHaus Musik ②

109 073; 109 074

'The Aureliano to have' writes Richard Osborne of this new film of Rossini's opera.

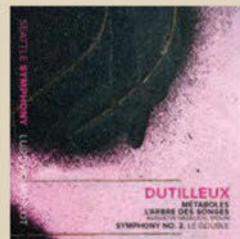
► REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2015



'POETRY IN
MUSIC'
The Sixteen /
Harry Christophers
Coro COR16134
The Sixteen
so consistently
perform at the

highest level that it's easy to take them for granted; this exploration of English settings of poetry is very beautiful indeed.

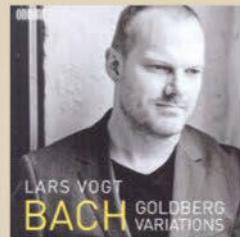
► REVIEWED IN NOVEMBER 2015



DUTILLEUX
Symphony No 2, etc
Augustin Hadelich
vn Seattle
Symphony /
Ludovic Morlot
Seattle Symphony
Media SSM1007

Ahead of the composer's centenary in 2016, this fine release sees Morlot and his Seattle players bring a concentrated intensity to Dutilleux's sound world.

► REVIEWED IN OCTOBER 2015



JS BACH
Goldberg Variations
Lars Vogt pf
Ondine ODE1273-2
A wonderfully
fresh, imaginative
and warm-hearted

journey through the *Goldbergs*, Lars Vogt's obvious enjoyment in exploring the work is evident in every variation.

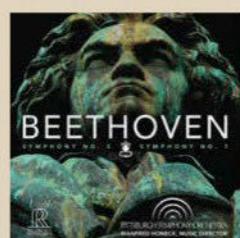
► REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2015



'THE SONG OF
THE STARS'
Wells Cathedral
School Choristers /
Christopher Finch
Naxos 8 573427
High praise for
high voices are

due to the girls of Wells Cathedral, one of the UK's leading champions of choral music and of girls voices within it.

► REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2015



BEETHOVEN
Symphonies Nos 5 & 7
Pittsburgh
Symphony
Orchestra /
Manfred Honeck
Reference Recordings FR718

A new release of two of music's most famous (and recorded) works, but a compelling one, really worth hearing.

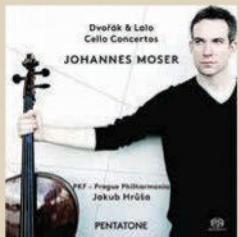
► REVIEWED IN DECEMBER 2015



TCHAIKOVSKY
Iolanta
Sols; Gürzenich
Orchestra, Cologne
/ Dmitri Kitaenko
Oehms ② OC963
A beautiful and
moving opera

which only now seems to be getting the attention it deserves – so there's no shame in highlighting another superb version.

► REVIEWED IN OCTOBER 2015



DVOŘÁK. LALO
Cello Concertos
Johannes Moser vc
Prague
Philharmonia /
Jakub Hruška
Pentatone PTC5186 488

Two concertos: one at the peak of the repertoire (in another excellent version); one lesser known but delivered with compelling advocacy.

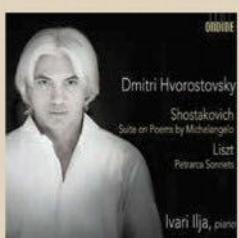
► REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2015



'MÉTAMORPHOSES'
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Haydn and Ligeti
Dudok Quartet
Resonus RES10150
Into an era rich in
really fine young
quartets comes

this impressive debut from the Amsterdam-based Dudok Quartet, with a programme as thoughtfully conceived as it is played.

► REVIEWED IN NOVEMBER 2015



LISZT Petrarch
Sonnets
SHOSTAKOVICH
Michelangelo Songs
Dmitri
Hvorostovsky bar
Ivari Ilja pf
Ondine ODE1277-2

A fine communicator – not to mention a baritone of real warmth – Hvorostovsky offers powerful performances of these settings of Italian poetry.

► REVIEWED IN DECEMBER 2015

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you may well pause to wonder at playing of an often moving poetic restraint and simplicity. Expertly partnered, finely balanced and recorded, Tryon's playing has a haunting after-effect, recalled 'long after it was heard no more'. **Bryce Morrison**

Doderer

Symphony No 2, 'Bohinj'^a.
Violin Concerto No 2, 'In Breath of Time'^b
^aAnne Schwanewilms sop ^bYury Revich vn
Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz / Ariane Matiakh
Capriccio F C5245 (72' • DDD)



While things may have moved on after modernism, writing absolute music as

anti-progressive and non-ironic as this still takes guts. Vienna-based Johanna Doderer (b1969) comes from a family of architects and writers and is not without big-name supporters: Patricia Kopatchinskaja was the recipient of a previous violin concerto. I can only report that I found this one, derived from a pre-existing dance piece, oddly shallow, like one of those interminable film scores that never actually gets anywhere but doesn't need to because the real development is going on in front of the camera. All that's foregrounded here is a skein of figuration thinly disguising shards of Arvo Pärt and Stravinsky's *Orpheus*.

Even more like a cinematic accessory is the Second Symphony, inspired by Slovenia's beautiful Lake Bohinj, which the booklet-note contrives to portray as some kind of Balkan backwater. It's not all idyllic travelogue, as Doderer is concerned to document the region's travails in the First World War. Then again, there's something disingenuous about that too. No mention of the former Gestapo headquarters at one end of the lake, let alone Marshal Tito's field hospital not far away in the hills. Perhaps something has been lost in translation. My doubts about the whole project were confirmed by the photographs of the composer herself slumped Ophelia-like in its waters. If this music is Mahlerian in scale, its vibe is recycled Soviet Baltic. With Shostakovich's *Leningrad* Symphony already in the frame, the arrival of Anne Schwanewilms momentarily thrusts us into sorrowful Górecki-land.

To end on a more positive note, both scores are remarkably well played and recorded. The symphony had not been aired prior to these sessions yet Ariane

Matiakh secures much more than a dutiful run-through. I just wish the music had more substance and staying power.

David Gutman

Dutilleux

Le Loup. La fille du diable - excerpts. Trois Tableaux symphoniques. Trois Sonnets de Jean Cassou^a. Quatre Mélodies^a
^aVincent Le Texier bar Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire / Pascal Rophé
BIS F BIS1651 (74' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



This is my third review of work by Henri Dutilleux in as many months, implying a certain premature zeal on behalf of record companies keen to mark Dutilleux's centenary year in 2016. Subtitled 'Song, Stage and Screen: the lesser-known Dutilleux', this programme represents the younger Henri, presumably needing to put bread on the table, employing his talents as a resourceful orchestrator and as a purveyor of well-heeled mood music commissioned from film, ballet and stage directors. And given the settled narrative that currently exists around Dutilleux's mature concert music – that he reduced everything that surrounded him, from Ravel and Messiaen to jazz, into a cultivated compositional purée – knowing that Dutilleux could also turn on a wicked ear for pastiche, and was not above full-frontal kitsch, acts as a useful corrective.

The music he composed for Henri Decoin's 1946 film *La fille du diable* and for a 1945 Paris stage adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, which he recycled as *Trois Tableaux symphoniques*, is grounded in the gestural vocabulary of Hollywood's best: composers like Franz Waxman and Dimitri Tiomkin. This music might play it safe harmonically but Dutilleux splashes orchestral timbres around with the abandon of an action painter, as blood-curdling swoops from an ondes martenot add local colour. Pascal Rophé and his Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire take these scores at face value, carving through notes with flamboyant cliffhanger urgency.

But the standout work is *Le Loup*, Dutilleux's 1953 ballet score, recorded only once before in 1954 and talked up habitually as a neglected masterwork. Personally, I'm not so sure. Rophé lends the 30-minute structure symphonic grandeur but, three decades after Stravinsky had reset the debate regarding ballet music, Dutilleux's score sounds

functional and reheated – bitonality pilfered from Ravel's *Boléro* (just as that 1946 film score keeps threatening to mutate into *Daphnis et Chloë*) with a palpable Les Six-derived energy keeping the music afloat. More pertinent to Dutilleux's future is the aphoristic *Trois Sonnets de Jean Cassou* (1954), sung with gossamer delicacy by Vincent Le Texier, the discreet, cryptic lyricism characteristic of Dutilleux's later work now in clear evidence. **Philip Clark**

Gernsheim

Violin Concertos – No 1, Op 42; No 2, Op 86.
Fantasiestück, Op 33
Linus Roth vn
Hamburg Symphony Orchestra / Johannes Zurl
CPO F CPO777 861-2 (61' • DDD)



Friedrich Gernsheim (1839-1916) clings to the footnotes of musical history. A child prodigy (at his Frankfurt debut he was the soloist in Hummel's A minor Concerto, played a set of variations on the violin and heard the orchestra play his new overture, all at the age of 11), he prospered as a composer and conductor, becoming known as 'the Dutch Brahms' – optimistically, but you can see why. His First Violin Concerto, in the same key as the older composer's, boasts a last-movement subject that is too close for comfort to the finale of Brahms's, as close as the 'Ode to Joy' is to the fourth movement of Brahms's First Symphony.

Listening blind to the first movement of Gernsheim's Op 42 (composed in 1880), your reaction might well be the same as mine – how pleasant, how very like Mendelssohn at times and Bruch at others, and what a shame it does not quite have their melodic genius. It's a delightful work; but when faced with the competition of Goldmark, for instance, Moszkowski or Vieuxtemps, let alone Mendelssohn, Bruch and Tchaikovsky, you can see why it fell by the wayside.

Let me emphasise: it is well worth hearing, as is the earlier *Fantasiestück*, Op 33 (1876). As the informative booklet observes, 'a genuinely great qualitative gap between [it] and, say, Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* is not really in evidence'. Linus Roth makes the most of its soaring flights of fancy. Gernsheim's Violin Concerto No 2 might have been composed more than three decades after No 1 but inhabits the same world, though it is more concentrated in its musical

arguments and with more individual touches. At one time it looked as though it might take off when it was championed by Georg Kulenkampff. Here it is given a well-merited second chance in an excellent, focused recording.

Jeremy Nicholas

Larsson

'Orchestral Works, Vol 2'

Symphony No 2, Op 17.

Variations, Op 50. Barococo, Op 64

Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra / Andrew Manze

CPO (F) CPO777 672-2 (70' • DDD/DSD)



If Larsson's First Symphony (A/14) is something of a mash-up of different styles and influences, then its successor from 1936-37 is again rather derivative, owing much to early Sibelius (whose influence dominated the First's finale) and Tchaikovsky, though there are splashes of Nielsen in a slow movement marred by less than elevated writing in its contrasting central episode. Nonetheless, the Second Symphony's expressive world is of a more

dramatic turn, the structure a little tighter but still allowing room for expansiveness.

The Variations for Orchestra (1962) is a far finer achievement, in the composer's later, tauter but still appealing language, a convincingly symphonic edifice built from the 12-note theme. Reminiscences of Sibelius still recur – not least of *Tapiola* late on – but this is more consistently Larsson than the earlier symphonies. There are opportunities aplenty for orchestral solos and ensemble writing, so the title could have been 'Symphonic Variations' or even 'Concerto for Orchestra'! Here particularly the players of the Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra are put on their collective mettle and, under Andrew Manze's firm and clear direction, they shine.

The *Barococo* suite (1973) was one of Larsson's last published works and is the most relaxed music here. Indeed, at times too relaxed, the pastiche of much of the invention (a mix of Strauss and early Shostakovich film and ballet music, among other things) tumbling into the trivial, as in the concluding Quadrille-Galopp. There are some barely disguised parodies, too. Splendid sound once again from CPO, in the warm acoustic of Helsingborg's Konserthuset.

Guy Rickards

Liszt · Schubert

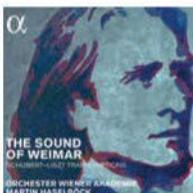
'The Sound of Weimar'

Liszt Trois Odes funèbres, S112 – No 1, Les morts: Oraison; No 2, La note. Vexilla regis prodeunt, S185 **Liszt/Schubert** Wandererfantasie, D760/ S366^a. Reitermarsch, D886 No 1. Trauermarsch, D819 No 5. Divertissement à la hongroise, D818

Gottlieb Wallisch fp

Vienna Academy Orchestra / Martin Haselböck

Alpha (F) ALPHA471 (78' • DDD)



With the notable exceptions of Immerseel/Anima Eterna, Roth/Les Siècles and Rohrer/Le Cercle de l'Harmonie, the original-instrument crowd has largely avoided Liszt's orchestral music, looking instead to Berlioz and Wagner.

Yet since 2011 Martin Haselböck and the Orchester Wiener Akademie have patiently tilled the fields, with recordings devoted to a complete cycle of symphonic poems, as well as the *Dante Symphony* and the six Rhapsodies. (Haselböck also recorded transcriptions of Liszt by Marcel Dupré, Leó Weiner and others with the German Radio Philharmonic of Saarbrücken and Kaiserlautern.)

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His newest offering with Wiener Akademie combines Liszt's well-known concerto treatment of Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*, with two of the *Trois Odes funèbres* and some genuine rarities: the first recording of the still unpublished *Vexilla regis prodeunt* from 1864 and three of Schubert's marches for piano duet (D886/1, 819/5 and 818), which Liszt transcribed for orchestra around 1860.

This setting of *Vexilla regis*, the sixth-century Latin hymn that held such significance for Liszt, is closer in spirit to one of the majestic instrumental movements of *Christus* than to the nobly austere form it would assume 15 years later in *Via Crucis*. It is the most interesting and refined performance on the disc.

Gottlieb Wallisch plays an 1851 JB Streicher piano for the *Wanderer* concerto; and though it is a pleasure to hear the balances discernable using historical instruments, many exquisite details of Liszt's deft orchestration are simply lost in this rather leaden accompaniment. Listeners as yet unfamiliar with the *Trois Odes funèbres* would do well to trust their first impressions to the fine 2011 set by Ivan Volkov and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (Hyperion, 5/11).

Certainly Liszt, the innovative conductor and orchestrator, stands to profit from the best historical instrument performances. Yet one is left wondering what the addition of a strong conductorial point of view might also achieve. Carefully shaped phrasing, blended sonorities and a sure grasp of characteristic yet flexible tempi – in a word, the requisites for trenchant, compelling interpretations of mid-19th-century orchestral literature – would go a long way towards bringing this strikingly beautiful and historically influential music more vividly to life. **Patrick Rucker**

Mahler

Symphony No 1. Blumine

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu
Ondine  ODE1264-5 (63' • DDD/DSD)



The competition is formidable – that's why it was sensible to find room for

Blumine. Whether you choose to experience Mahler's discarded serenade as an encore or slot it back into place within the symphony's earlier incarnation as a five-movement Symphonic Poem in Two Parts, this moonlit offcut makes intriguing listening. You won't of course be getting

the authentic 1893 Hamburg version of the whole offered by Jan Willem de Vriend (Challenge Classics, 6/10).

Instead Lintu presents a compellingly fresh and clear-eyed account of the definitive four-movement score. His Finnish team, routinely acclaimed for its clarity of articulation, delivers the goods here too without necessarily providing that sour edge to textual detail and larger-than-life sonority some still expect in Mahler. Turn to Leonard Bernstein and you're in a bigger, more self-consciously interventionist world, a conspicuously Mitteleuropean and Jewish one at that, as the maestro himself would have insisted. It's also a world that excludes *Blumine*.

Having embraced Mahler's first-movement exposition repeat and given his pastoral particulars almost too much space, Lintu concludes with a notably eager dash to the finishing line. Not really earthy enough in the *scherzo*, he mercifully ignores the recent scholarly preference for massed double basses at the start of the third movement. Even in the finale he can seem overly reluctant to bend the music to a personal vision but his easy lightness is deceptive. Everything is so precisely calibrated that we imagine the music plays itself. Recommended, even if rivals pack a greater punch, because Ondine's sound is state-of-the-art. **David Gutman**

Symphony No 1 – selected comparison:

RCO, Bernstein (3/89) (DG)
427 303-2GH or 477 5174GB6

Mendelssohn

A Midsummer Night's Dream – incidental music, Op 61^a. The Hebrides, Op 32.

Die schöne Melusine, Op 26
^a**Camilla Tilling, ^aMagdalena Risberg** sop
^a**Swedish Radio Choir; Swedish Chamber Orchestra / Thomas Dausgaard**

BIS  BIS2166 (69' • DDD/DSD)



To Mendelssohn Thomas Dausgaard brings the qualities that have distinguished

his cycles of Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, notably a spring in the step, especially on dotted rhythms that lift and sometimes iconoclastically swing into the next bar.

The music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is done complete, with no linking narrations but female voices well matched to the Swedish Chamber Orchestra's quick vibrato, lightly applied, and with a superbly characterful first clarinet. If the flutes set the scene in the Overture – and here they

surge with hoots of joy into the first *tutti* – it is the clarinets who lead off the Scherzo's merry dance, and the procession in the comic funeral march which could have been composed by Mahler, and then was, in the slow movement of his First Symphony.

In such subtle parody and deadpan wit, Dausgaard has a kinship with Klempener's particular approach to the score, demonstrated in recordings from 1951 (Concertgebouw, Archiphon), 1955 (Cologne Radio, ICA) and 1960 (Philharmonia, EMI). Their tempi may differ here and there – hardly at all in Amsterdam – but their rhythmic grip of, say, the horn duet opening the Nocturne sets them apart from the broad arches drawn by André Previn. Like Masur, and few others, Dausgaard finds a true *andante* rather than *adagio* for this movement; but, unlike Masur, he also takes heed of the qualifying *tranquillo* in the passing clouds of the central section.

A 'period' style of orchestral balance (lit with an agreeable acoustic haze by the BIS engineers) does not extend to chopping up phrases: Dausgaard and his Swedish players bring a velvet *legato* to the second theme of the Overture. Bottom's bray is likewise assimilated within the texture of an early-Romantic orchestra and not tipped into parody. The seascape concert overtures are similarly spruce, their episodes not tacked about but brought home to abrupt and atmospheric closure: ship's docked, off you get. Is this disc the overture to a symphony cycle? I hope so. **Peter Quantrill**

Mozart

Concertos for Two Pianos^a – No 7, 'Lodron', K242; No 10, K365. Piano Duet Sonata, K381

Lucas Jussen, Arthur Jussen pfs

^a**Academy of St Martin in the Fields / Sir Neville Marriner**

DG  481 2130 (66' • DDD)



Mozart's Concerto for three pianos, K242, was composed in 1776 for the Countess Lodron and her two daughters, and later arranged for (the only slightly more convenient) two pianos. The Concerto for two pianos proper followed in 1779 and was conceived for Mozart himself and his sister Nannerl to perform together. Much play is made of the opportunities for the pianos to echo each other or hocket figures between the two instruments, as well as simply letting one accompany the other or one provide harmonic filling to the melody of the other. It follows that this music is



Brothers Lucas and Arthur Jussen are perfectly matched in Mozart's concertos for two pianos on Deutsche Grammophon

ideally cast for a pair of pianists who match each other in tone, temperament and technique. Two brothers, for instance.

Lucas (b1993) and Arthur (b1996) Jussen are such an ideal pair, right down to their identical floppy blond hair, black T-shirts and winklepickers. It's not quite that only their mother can tell them apart, but on hearing them play these two duet concertos, even she might struggle. The cadenza in K365's opening movement ends with a chromatic scale over three and a half octaves, split between the two pianos, and I swear you can't hear the join. Those moments where the two pianos toss a motif between each other sound for all the world like a single instrument. And each knows when to fine his tone down to *pianissimo* to let the other have his moment in the spotlight.

The Jussen boys have found perhaps the perfect collaborator in Sir Neville Marriner, who has conducted more Mozart than most; the Academy acquit themselves well. The disc closes with the sonata that all amateur duettists attempt – the D major of 1772 – perhaps not played with the freedom that comes with the experience enjoyed by Pires and Argerich in Lugano but with a youthful

exuberance that's entirely appropriate for music by a 16-year-old composer.

David Threasher

Duet Sonata – selected comparison:
Pires, Argerich (8/13) (EMI/WARN) 721119-2

Pettersson

Symphony No 13
Norrköping Symphony Orchestra /
Christian Lindberg
BIS (E) BIS2190 (67' • DDD/DSD)



The Thirteenth Symphony (1976) is the largest of Pettersson's later symphonies, second only in size to No 9, completed just five years earlier. I first encountered it in the 1993 BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra broadcast conducted by Alun Francis ahead of the work's only previous recording (one of the few broadcasts of one of this composer's symphonies in the UK). I reviewed the resultant CD warmly as a 'tremendous, full-blooded account' then and as a performance it stands up very well now.

Fine as that is, this newcomer is manifestly superior. The Norrköping Symphony Orchestra articulate the music's 'soaring melodies and grippingly searing polyphony' more convincingly still (not that the BBC Scottish players were in any way deficient) and Lindberg shapes the structure more compellingly, although there is little difference in overall duration. It is a matter of expressive interpretation rather than technicalities of performance. Lindberg seems to feel more keenly the work's intense range of mood – the ferocity and depth of its emotion, the consolation that this engenders – and communicates this to his orchestra in masterly fashion. If anyone wonders what it is that conductors truly contribute to an orchestral performance, then this disc is glowing testimony to their importance.

The Norrköping Symphony Orchestra's playing is superb, too, certainly matching their Scottish rivals. BIS's rich, natural sound has more immediacy and depth than CPO's. If you admire CPO's disc, as I do, you will marvel at the additional richness this new recording brings out. A stunning account and the one to have. **Guy Rickards**
Comparative version:
BBC Scottish SO, Francis (3/94) (CPO) CPO999 284-2



Antonio Pappano with the Gramophone Young Artist of 2013, Canadian pianist Jan Lisiecki – they have recorded Schumann together for DG.

Prokofiev

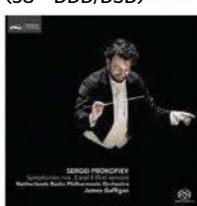
Symphonies - No 3, Op 44;

No 4 (first version), Op 47

Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra / James Gaffigan

Challenge Classics  CC72584

(58' • DDD/DSD)



It's the Shostakovich effect all over again. You might feel that what we need now are

good modern recordings of Prokofiev's lesser-known pieces – there are three rarely played concert overtures for a start. Instead we've another symphony cycle in what has become a very competitive field. Thirty-something American James Gaffigan, spotted as 'one to watch' by *Gramophone* in 2008 and currently Chief Conductor of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra, directs the Dutch orchestra of which he is Principal Guest in his most ambitious project to date. Those with a preference for realistically recessed surround sound will like the way this Northstar production for Challenge Classics leaves the musicians to their own devices rather than disrupting perspectives

with overly analytical mixing. With Valery Gergiev and the LSO we are up close and personal on the Barbican's shallow stage. With Kirill Karabits and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra it's anyone's guess.

What of the interpretations? Gaffigan is no stranger to Prokofiev's idiom, having often featured the composer in his extensive touring schedule. He has spoken of the Third as 'pure evil' but you'd have to go back to the likes of Gennady Rozhdestvensky and the intimidating blare of his Soviet brass to get the greatest sense of living on the edge. As might be expected, Gaffigan is nothing if not polished. He keeps a tight rein on the first movement, achieving translucent results even when Prokofiev throws up speculative tangles of sonic clutter that scarcely lend themselves to elucidation. Before we slip into its exquisitely scored coda, the movement's final march-like restatement is taken at what may be an unprecedented lick. By accident or design the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic come up with an unusually lifelike bell with which to sound the alarm and bookend the argument as a whole – we're reminded of the music's origins in Prokofiev's sinister pseudo-ecclesiastical opera *The Fiery Angel*. After this

exploration of seedier depths, the Fourth Symphony sounds like a divertissement, which is perhaps as it should be. The score is given in its tauter original version and nicely turned, without too much forward drive. If neither work convinces as a conventional symphonic entity, perhaps that isn't the point. A promising start has been made to this latest *intégrale*.

David Gutman

Symphony No 3 – selected comparisons:

Moscow RSO, Rozhdestvensky

(57'3") (MELO) MELCD100 1797

LSO, Gergiev (6/06) (PHIL) 475 7655PM4

Bournemouth SO, Karabits (6/14) (ONYX) ONYX4137

Rachmaninov

Symphony No 3, Op 44.

Symphonic Dances, Op 45

Gürzenich Orchestra, Cologne / Dmitri Kitaenko

Oehms  OC442 (81' • DDD)



The variably transliterated Dmitri Kitaenko, who recorded *The Bells* for Chandos in the 1990s (2/92), has recently completed a more comprehensive

Rachmaninov symphony series featuring the Gürzenich Orchestra of Cologne, with whom he enjoys an ongoing association as Conductor Laureate. Technically speaking, the sequence matches the very best, now including the recent double album from Paavo Järvi's Orchestre de Paris which takes in the two works under review (Erato, A/15). Kitaenko secures comparably excellent playing and the sound is at once spacious and well focused. Interpretatively speaking the picture is more mixed. This is broad, reflective, perhaps deliberately old-fashioned Rachmaninov, not unlike Evgeni Svetlanov's later efforts though without much in the way of dramatic impulse. Textures are detailed as well as sumptuous, but it's as though second subjects exist to be indulged.

In the Third Symphony the lingering approach works best in the central movement. Launched by one of the slowest chant-like preambles on disc, the first lacks its exposition repeat while the finale also tends to hang fire, rousing itself effectively enough for a final dash before slamming on rhetorical brakes. The three *Symphonic Dances* are more various, the first played relatively straight, the second not so much suave as shuddery, riven by perilously extreme *rubato*. Are those real church bells near the start of the finale? The argument grinds to a halt once too often for my taste, yet there's no doubting the conviction of a reading that avoids sentimentality in the obvious danger spots, doesn't slow down unduly for the unexpected reprise of 'Blagosloveni, Gospodi' and allows the concluding gong stroke to ring out impressively.

Well worth a punt even if the booklet-notes are built around a false premise, unaware that Rachmaninov became a US citizen near the end of his life. **David Gutman**

Saint-Saëns

Cello Concertos^a – No 1, Op 33; No 2, Op 119.

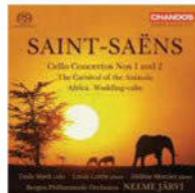
Le carnaval des animaux^b. Caprice-valse,

'Wedding Cake', Op 76^c. Africa, Op 89^c

^{ab}Truls Mørk vc ^{bc}Louis Lortie, ^bHélène Mercier pfs

Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Neeme Järvi

Chandos (F) CHSA5162 (76' • DDD/DSD)



I like the idea of a CD where top billing passes from one star soloist to another. And I like a programme that demands different levels of involvement from the orchestra. Thus, after the two cello concertos, Truls Mørk is happy to play second fiddle (so to speak) to Louis Lortie and Hélène Mercier

in *Carnival* before Lortie takes over the solo spot for the two piano-and-orchestra works.

This is one of those recordings where it seems invidious to look for faults and which just encourages you to sit back, relax, listen and wallow. Mørk brings his characteristic incisiveness and mountain-spring tone to the concertos, adopting somewhat broader tempi in all three movements of the A minor (No 1) than such rivals as Steven Isserlis and Jamie Walton (their timings are remarkably similar). Conversely, in the fluctuating pulse of the first movement of the D minor (No 2), Mørk is slightly brisker.

The *Grande fantaisie zoologique* receives one of its most successful performances on disc (*sans* narrator) with just the right balance of instrumental virtuosity, sensitive musicianship and, where the opportunity presents itself, fun. Chandos has gone to the trouble and expense of hiring a glass harmonica and its player (Alasdair Malloy) for 'Aquarium', while Lortie and Mercier actually made me laugh out loud in 'Pianistes' with their grade 3 attempt at ensemble. They sound genuinely unrehearsed and incompetent (as many pianists play this section straight as those who try too hard and over-egg the comedy). 'Le cygne' is elegantly phrased and gracefully paced – more Thames than Tuonela – and in fact my only reservation about the whole *Carnival* is why the two pianos are so dominant in 'L'éléphant'.

Lortie dispatches the *Wedding Cake* and *Africa* with an appropriate light touch and Gallic insouciance, clearly revelling in the digital challenges Saint-Saëns presents, matched every step of the way by the spirited Bergen players and Järvi. It is the best version of these two enchanters since Stephen Hough in 2001, but if you want this particular Chandos selection there is no competition. Lovely programme.

Lovely recording. What's not to like?

Jeremy Nicholas

Wedding Cake, Africa – selected comparison:

Hough, CBSO, Oramo (1/01) (HYPE) CDA67331/2

Schumann

Piano Concerto, Op 54^a. Introduction and

Allegro appassionato, Op 92^a. Introduction and

Concert Allegro, Op 134^a. Träumerei, Op 15 No 7

Jan Lisiecki pfa Orchestra of the Accademia

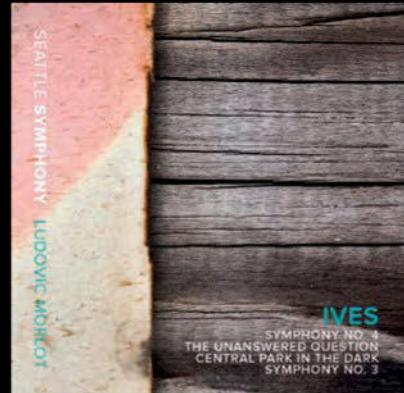
Nazionale di Santa Cecilia / Sir Antonio Pappano

DG (F) 479 5327GH (59' • DDD)

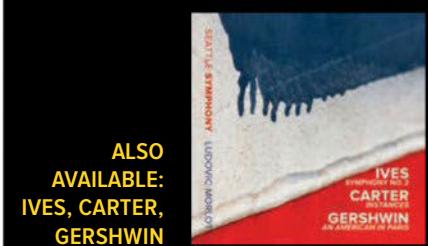


Having recorded the Chopin Etudes aged just 18 (10/13), what could be more natural

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than the Schumann Concerto at 20? Jan Lisiecki made his Proms debut in 2013 in this very work, together with Pappano and the Santa Cecilia orchestra, and it's a partnership that audibly works very well. And how good to have the concerto alongside the two wondrous yet still under-recorded concert pieces.

If I hadn't known the identity of the pianist, I wouldn't have necessarily guessed that this was a young performer at the keyboard. There's tremendous maturity in terms of the sweep of the concerto's opening movement, albeit coupled with an infectious glee (just sample the piano's re-entry at 5'55"). A sense of exploration permeates all the performances here, too; the first-movement cadenza is particularly imaginative in that regard, while simultaneously sounding utterly natural. And Pappano's wind soloists are suitably characterful – sample the first oboe (tr 1, 10'22") or the bassoon repartee in the finale (tr 3, 1'00"). Pappano's experiences in the opera house feed into the mix, too, both dramatically and also in an almost vocal style of phrasing.

They get the right speed for the spirit of the Intermezzo (though Howard Shelley is finer still on Chandos at an unusually fleet tempo), and Lisiecki is graceful without being contrived – which is more than can be said for Angela Hewitt, who seems to be trying too hard. But Pappano does pull things around too freely for my taste at the movement's climax. Alexander Melnikov's recent version on period instruments is particularly beguiling in this movement. Lisiecki's finale is also impressive, making enough of the rhythms without overemphasis (try from 6'05" to sample the litheness of the interplay between soloist and orchestra); Pappano and the soloist seem in complete musical accord, giving Perahia and Abbado a run for their money, which is no mean feat.

Perahia sets off at a slightly faster pace in the Introduction to the *Konzertstück*, Op 92, the Berlin solo horn a thing of beauty. As a consequence, the outline of the theme when taken up by the piano is a shade more natural-sounding than in the hands of Lisiecki or Hewitt. However, the *Allegro appassionato* section has a real sweep, the interplay between soloist and orchestra again unerring; it's hard to believe that Lisiecki doesn't have decades of experience behind him in this regard. Op 134 offers a greater challenge in its mix of fragility and abundant virtuosity: Lisiecki is daring in the quasi-improvisatory quality of the Introduction but Perahia is ultimately the more sure-footed guide. A natural recording captures this imaginative spinner

of musical tales to excellent effect. And the disc is rounded out with a touchingly confiding 'Träumerei'. **Harriet Smith**

Wks for Pf & Orch – selected comparisons:

Perabia, BPO, Abbado (1/98) (SONY) SK64577

Hewitt, DSO Berlin, Lintu (9/12) (HYPE) CDA67885

Piano Concerto – selected comparisons:

Melnikov, Freiburg Baroque Orch, Heras-Casado

(9/15) (HARM) HMC90 2198

Shelley, Orch of Op North (5/09) (CHAN) CHAN10509

Sibelius



Complete Symphonies (Nos 1-7)

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

ArtHaus Musik F ⑤ DVD 101 796;

F ③ 101 797 (9h 47' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live

Includes Introductions to the symphonies,

Documentary 'Sibelius, Lintu and Seven

Symphonies' & 'Sort of Sibelius!', a short

film series by Piia Hirvensalo



I doubt
Hannu Lintu's
Sibelius would
sound the way

it does here had the conductor not been so deeply involved in the exploratory projects that make up the bulk of this set's 10-hour playing time. In the introductory documentary we see the conductor working through the known knowns of Sibelius's various mental and creative states in Vienna, Berlin, Rapallo, Stockholm, Helsinki and other cities associated with the symphonies. Before each performance with the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, filmed live at the Helsinki Music Centre, Lintu and the composer Osmo Räihälä engage in movement-by-movement analyses of each symphony's themes (relevant notation appears under footage of the orchestra demonstrating said themes in the Centre's basement studio). Lintu has always had an interesting analytical perspective on the symphonies but he delves even further here. One strand he appears to enunciate in both his commentary and his performances is that Sibelius was wild and untempered at the time of the First Symphony; that the tragedy of infant death led to the searching, tortured elements we hear in the Second; and that he relaxed into his unique concept of symphonic construction with the Third.

Still, I find it hard to reconcile Lintu's histrionic, borderline caricature approach to the First Symphony. But it tells us what's in store aesthetically: delicious orchestral blend; intensely disciplined

strings (though Lintu doesn't articulate with the forensic detail of Osmo Vänskä); some outstanding individual players; understated camerawork; and a photogenic hall whose dark seating and off-white stage were built for TV broadcast. Enshrined in that is something else, too: an important and unparalleled audiovisual document of a Finnish orchestra, audience and venue close-up in a landmark year for the country. What you see feels entirely of the here and now; the series of elegant butterfly tattoos that runs up the right forearm of harpist Laura Hynninen is so redolent of time and place while somehow sensitive to this winged music as well.

In the Second Symphony, Lintu is less hot-headed, underscoring the score's introspective working-out and shades of tragedy. The *Andante* is painfully tender but the striving hymn of the finale is played relatively straight before an unusually defiant last page. Lintu has fascinating ideas about the Third Symphony and its thematic origins in Sibelius's abandoned cantata *Marjatta*. There's a neat, circumspect build-up to the opening *Allegro*'s blossoming into its 'sleigh-ride' theme and a *Parzifal*-like luminosity to the way the movement's final chord rests. The feeling in Symphony No 4 is that the music isn't so much being wrenched from the soil as glimpsed somewhere on the horizon, intangible. The *Largo* is intensely confessional and the final *Allegro* feels like a bid for escape, its strain foreshadowing the music to come.

Lintu's unusual choreographing of the contrary-motion outfolding in the Fifth's opening movement jarred initially but perhaps works in the context of what comes after. There is something riveting and unshakeably secure about this performance, the strings and brass of the Finnish RSO magnificent at that first movement's final, excitable ascent. As in the Third's *Andantino*, the Fifth's *Andante* is filled with air, Lintu standing back slightly to let the rhythmic patterns find their own equilibrium. He introduces a touch more expanse at the modulation of the Swan theme in the finale, which makes for an palpable sense of flight; the twisting melee that prefaces the farewell jabs has a good combination of resistance and momentum.

In keeping with that idea of a linear cycle, the Sixth isn't exactly light but is well sprung. Lintu's sensitive spotlighting of themes a consistent feature. In the Seventh Symphony it's a case of balancing some pluses with some minuses:

Lintu can't quite unite the varying tempi under a meta-flow like Paavo Berglund could, which makes for a slightly episodic feel, but once again his sense of strain is revealing, as in the bars before the first trombone solo. Lintu, his face always a picture, can really spur his orchestra on to find another gear when it needs to.

To describe this as an important snapshot of orchestral Helsinki in 2015 is to belittle the touching gift that is Finns offering us their greatest music with such undemonstrative heart and soul. In the same vein, perhaps the icing on an undeniably epic cake of performance and analysis is Pia Hirvensalo's kooky documentary series *Sort of Sibelius*. Here we get psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, graphology, toxicology and even mixology: a delightful sequence in which two professional alcohol pundits attempt to drink like Sibelius did. In a word, unparalleled. **Andrew Mellor**

Steibelt

'The Classical Piano Concerto, Vol 2'

Piano Concertos - No 3, 'L'orage', Op 33;

No 5, 'A la chasse', Op 64;

No 7, 'Grand concerto militaire'

Ulster Orchestra / Howard Shelley pf

Hyperion ® CDA68104 (80' • DDD)



This is the second volume of Hyperion's Classical Piano Concerto series, one that was launched with Howard Shelley leading the Ulster Orchestra in a delightful disc of Dussek (A/14). For Vol 2 Shelley has turned to Steibelt, learning an awful lot of notes in the process, and it's difficult to imagine these three concertos receiving more compelling performances. Whether that was time well spent is another matter.

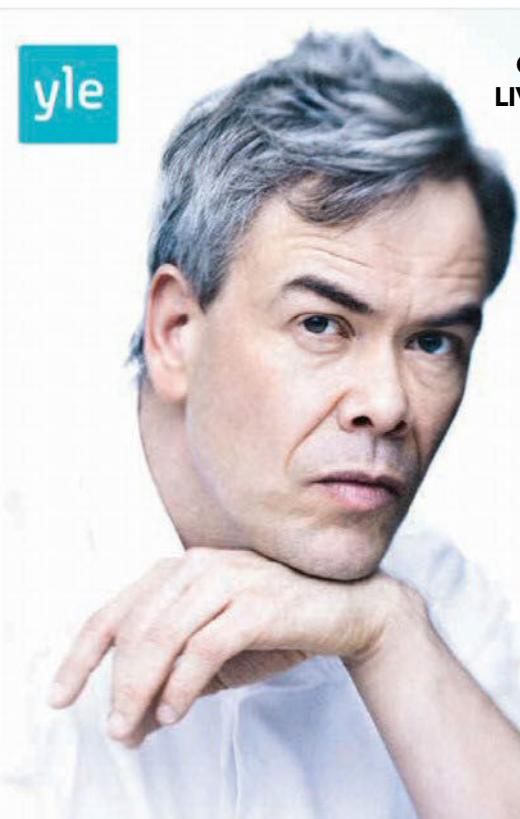
Berlin-born Daniel Steibelt (1765–1823) is best known for two things: challenging Beethoven in a battle of the keyboards (and proving a bad loser when the inevitable happened), and for his *L'orage* Concerto, in which a pastoral finale is rudely interrupted by a weather front, conjured by dramatic piano tremolos and swirling scales, before blue skies return.

The most convincing moments in these pieces are those that sound Mozartian, though it can't be said that Steibelt is either a conjurer of memorable melodies or harmonically a deep thinker. In place of

musical development it's down to the soloist to provide amusement through sheer numbers of notes. As Richard Wigmore points out in his splendid notes (a mixture of erudition and quiet wit): 'As a natural showman, Steibelt seemed to lack confidence writing and playing slow, sustained music.' The slow movements of the Third and Fifth Concertos are both based on folk tunes, in the case of the latter a set of variations on 'Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon'; unfortunately all this does is show the limitations of Steibelt's imagination. The finales come off best – that of the Fifth is a good-humoured chase, the orchestral tally-hos interspersed by dazzling passagework for the soloist.

For the Seventh Concerto, Steibelt demands extravagant forces for the second (final) movement, loading on to his somewhat effete march theme an additional wind-and-brass orchestra as well as a large battery of percussion. It's rousing done (though there is an unexpected cut of some 70 bars after the pause – 5'22" into tr 8 – which seems an odd decision) and the disc as a whole is worth hearing for Shelley, but otherwise I'd suggest that Steibelt is a niche interest.

Harriet Smith



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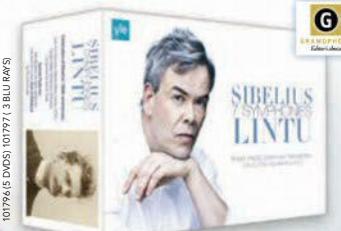
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David Threasher listens to a selection of discs that seek to rehabilitate the reputations of musicians who have fallen from favour over the past two centuries



Nicholas Newland and The Amadè Players make a case for the forgotten Kleinmeister of Vienna

What if Haydn had perished in one of the many fires that ravaged the Esterházy residences? What if, along with Gregor Werner (ostensibly his boss), he had lived only until 1766? The history of the symphony would, of course, be rather different, and it would have been left to others to make the innovations to which he lays fair claim. Who would have been the leading light during the *Sturm und Drang* period (for Haydn, from the mid-1760s until the early 1770s)? And who would have become the darling of London society in the 1790s?

Along comes a disc presenting music by two of the figures whose names might be offered in response to these idle thoughts. One is **Johann Baptist Vanhal** (1739–1813), perhaps the one composer who pursued a *Sturm und Drang* agenda with the same assiduousness as Haydn; the other is **Ignaz Pleyel** (1757–1831), an erstwhile pupil of Haydn's (and Vanhal's), and his opponent in the manufactured spat between the two in the English capital during the 1790s.

Luca Bizzozero conducts the Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto in a symphony by each man, and a violin concerto by Pleyel with soloist Sebastian Bohren.

Not that Vanhal exclusively cultivated the furrowed-brow demeanour of *Sturm und Drang*. As *The New Grove* remarks, his music is notable too for its lyricism, and his fondness for the 'singing *allegro*', a first-movement form that is said to have influenced Mozart, which opens with a quiet *cantabile* theme. The G major Symphony, Bryan G8, probably dates from 1771–73 and displays this lyricism and a streak of eccentricity – the rising unison arpeggio that punctuates the first movement, for example. Nevertheless, the agitated language, complete with syncopations, silences and dynamic extremes, is present in a 14-minute, three-movement work that recalls to some extent the style of Haydn's earlier symphonies.

However, Nicholas Newland, a leading Vanhal scholar at Goldsmiths' College, offers something a little more daring with the Amadè players. The A minor

Symphony, Bryan a2 (Newland dates it to around 1769) is one of those works that has four instead of the usual two horns – handy in a minor-key work, as natural horns can't play the major third of a chord; crooked in two (or more) keys, they can interlock to fill in minor harmonies. This symphony could easily be mistaken for one of Haydn's numbered in the 40s, which gives an idea of its uneasy sound world.

A Symphony in F by Pleyel on Bizzozero's disc dates from 1786 and is thus contemporary with Haydn's 'Paris' Symphonies rather than his 'Londons'. On this evidence, Pleyel's style combines the urbane suavity of Mozart with a touch of the folk-inflected rough and tumble of the elder composer, especially in the Minuet and finale. There is also a *Grand Concerto* in D, from around the same time, which offers Bohren ample opportunity to display his virtuosity. Newland, on the other hand, offers a violin concerto by Vanhal – one that Mozart played in 1777, for which he received 'unanimous applause', as he wrote to his father. Despite some occasional

intonation issues, it's easy to see from George Clifford's performance how its combination of challenging figuration and soaring melody attracted Mozart to the work. Clifford is joined by Dominika Fehér in a double concerto by Dittersdorf, full of sweet-sounding parallel thirds and sixths, and the disc also features a tiny, nine-minute symphony by Karl [von] Ordóñez (or Carlo d'Ordóñez).

Lovers of the music of this period may be most attracted by the first recording of an E flat Requiem by Vanhal. Newland told me that Vanhal wrote Requiems for his parents, and that this gentle work for chorus, strings and horns is definitely the 'Mummy Requiem'. No fires of hell here, and those hoping to have found a great forerunner of the Mozart will find no telltale hints in the manner of, say, Michael Haydn's or Gassmann's Requiems. The Choir of Sidney Sussex join The Amadè Players for this glowing performance which crowns a thought-provoking programme.

Pleyel is fairly well represented on disc, not least the *Sinfonia concertante* he composed as part of the *querelle* whipped up by the London press between him and Haydn. Recordings of Vanhal have been fewer and further between, so it's encouraging to witness the current flurry of excitement. There are also smaller works on recent mixed programmes: an oboe quartet played by Cuarteto Emisferio (Oboe Classics CC2030) and a pair of keyboard duettinos performed by Gustav Auzinger and Martina Schobersberger (Fra Bernardo FB1507153). A composer well worth investigating.

Other symphonists are available. **Franz Anton Hoffmeister** was born in Tübingen, south west Germany, two years before Mozart. His last two symphonies appear to date from the first decade of the 19th century and already breathe a Beethovenian air, even if the overture to his opera *Der Königssohn aus Ithaka* opens a bit like *Figaro* and continues more in a *Don Giovanni* vein. Both symphonies are on the large scale, in four movements with slow introductions to the opening *allegros*. The minuets are *scherzos* in all but name. The faster movements work on the Beethovenian principle of motivic development with contrapuntal excursions, all admirably put across by the beefy-sounding Svizzera Italiana Orchestra under the English but Swiss-resident conductor Howard Griffiths. Interestingly, the theme of the slow movement of the C major Symphony (presumably Hoffmeister's last symphony, which he called No 66) is a straight crib from the slow movement of Haydn's No 97

in the same key. Coincidence, plagiarism or dutiful homage? Bert Hagels's otherwise thorough notes offer us no clue.

Joachim Nikolas Eggert was slightly younger than Hoffmeister and born on the isle of Rügen, off Germany's Baltic coast. Given his adjacency to Scandinavia, it's no surprise that he ended up as a member of the court orchestra in Stockholm – although it appears that he was marooned there by illness on the way to St Petersburg. Still, in his alarmingly short life (he died in 1813 aged just 34) he was responsible for introducing the music of Beethoven to Swedish audiences. There's a definite whiff of the Bonn master as early as Eggert's First Symphony, even if the spirits of Mozart and Haydn are never far away. The back-cover blurb of Vol 1 remarks that his music also 'foreshadows Mendelssohn in its wind textures and rich harmonies', and there's something hinting at the *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture in the woodwind-writing of the Second Symphony, even if the more anguished sound world of its outer movements puts one more in mind of another adopted Swede, Johann Martin Kraus. The Third Symphony apes Mozart's grand E flat manner and demonstrates Eggert's obvious love of the timbres of bassoons and low clarinets. The Fourth, which 'reflects the military backdrop to the political unrest of the times', makes use of Turkish percussion, a trope that appears to have lasted in European music for 30 years or more. Watch out for the gunshot in the slow movement! Gérard Korsten's Gävle Symphony Orchestra may not sound quite as assured as the Svizzera Italiana but they shine a valuable light on the music of yet another composer who is better than his neglect would suggest. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Pleyel, Vanhal Orch Wks
Padova e Veneto Orch / Bizzozero
Sony Classical ® 88843 04093-2



Vanhal et al 'Forgotten Vienna'
Amadè Players / Newland
Resonus ® RES10157



Hoffmeister Symphonies
Svizzera Italiana Orch / Griffiths
CPO ® CPO777 895-2

Eggert Symphonies, Vol 1
Gävle SO / Korsten
Naxos ® 8 572457

Eggert Symphonies, Vol 2
Gävle SO / Korsten
Naxos ® 8 573378

R Strauss · Magnard

Magnard Chant funèbre, Op 9

R Strauss Ein Heldenleben, Op 40

Orchestre National de Lille /

Jean-Claude Casadesus

Naxos ® 8 573563 (61' • DDD)



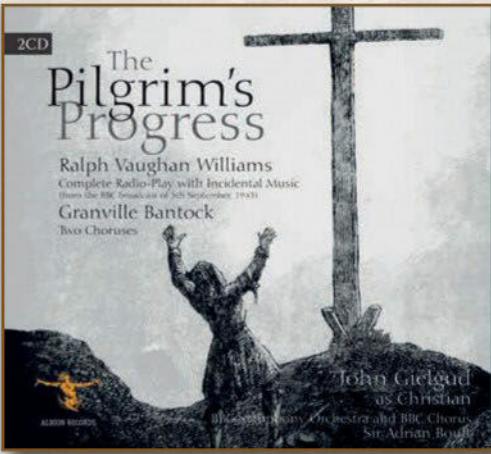
This disc marks a double celebration: 40 years since the foundation of the Orchestre National de Lille and a half-century of the career of its founder, Jean-Claude Casadesus. The *Heldenleben* reveals Casadesus as a sensible, highly musical Straussian and shows an orchestra with some fine players. The brass sound, particularly the trombones, is pleasingly robust and forceful, especially in the opening section, and the principal horn is also outstanding, bringing a gorgeous, mellifluous tone to the final resigned duet with leader Fernand Iaciù's solo violin – and Casadesus keeps the thread through the complex reminiscences of the final 10 minutes expertly too.

It's a performance that would have been very satisfactory in concert in Lille's Nouveau Siècle hall – where it was recorded in just one day five years ago – but, alas, doesn't really cut it on disc. The engineering is decent but not much more, and the playing of the orchestra is less than ideally robust or refined, a tad soggy when it should be pin-sharp, unseductive when it should make you swoon. Iaciù doesn't make for the feistiest Hero's Companion in his somewhat cautious-sounding solos, while there are several tuning issues in the wind section (including a slight sourness in the final chord).

If the Strauss is uncompetitive in a crowded field, the coupling might be a draw, and there are certainly fewer alternatives when it comes to Albéric Magnard's noble, gently moving tribute to his father, composed three years before Strauss's 1896 tone-poem but otherwise hardly an obvious companion. But the performance here, though loving, lingering and heartfelt, has similar issues, both in terms of engineering (it was recorded four years later than the *Heldenleben*) and playing. If you can find it, Michel Plasson's account as part of his Toulouse cycle of the composer's symphonies (EMI, 3/84, 3/87 – nla) is an altogether higher-quality affair.

Hugo Shirley

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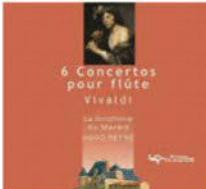
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Vivaldi

Recorder Concertos - RV108; 'Il gardellino', RV428; 'La tempesta di mare', Op 10 No 1 RV433; 'La notte', Op 10 No 2 RV439; RV440; RV441; Op 3 No 11 RV565 - Largo
La Simphonie du Marais / Hugo Reyne rec
Musiques à la Chabotterie © 605012 (60' • DDD)



Hugo Reyne presents this disc very much in terms of his life with Vivaldi's recorder

concertos, from copying a tune from a TV advert when he was 10, not knowing that it was from *La notte*, to a first ear-opening hearing five years later of Frans Brüggen's recording of RV441, and encounters with particular instruments and teachers. He has also dedicated each concerto to someone important in his recorder-playing life, which surely gives his selection integrity and focus, as well as the freedom to treat each of these six concertos (plus an extra slow movement) as an individual. Freedom, and boldness too: there's a daring worthy of Red Priest in his decision to preface two of the three named descriptive works with onomatopoeic instrumental introductions (rather skilful ones as it happens) and spoken titles. The creaking timbers and crying gulls added to *La tempesta di mare* and the chirrups that usher in *Il gardellino* will I hope make you smile, and if on repeated listening they should irritate, well, they can be programmed out.

Reyne, better known as the director of *La Simphonie du Marais*, is a recorder player who has always combined technical adeptness with a naturally projected musical personality, and these are virtues that really help him bring 'yet another' Vivaldi concerto disc to life. It is interesting to hear how he gives himself expressive space by adopting measured tempi in the outer movements of RV441 (echoes here of the admired Brüggen), or how by choosing a low-lying and rich-toned flute for RV440 he creates a special sound world for it, especially in the eerie languor of the *Larghetto*. Although these performances are not always as slick and quick in ensemble as some others (or as carefully recorded), there is a relaxed conviviality about them and a personal generosity that makes them very likeable. **Lindsay Kemp**

Weigl

Violin Concerto^a. Concerto for Piano Left Hand^b
^aDavid Frühwirth vn Florian Krumpöck pf^c cond
North German Philharmonic Orchestra, Rostock /
^bManfred Hermann Lehner
Capriccio © C5232 (71' • DDD)



This was my first encounter with the music of Karl Weigl (1881-1949). I fear it may also be my last. I have listened to this disc twice now (though I admit my attention wandered even more the second time). It's the aural equivalent of trying to pick up a bar of soap in the bath, elusive in form, enigmatic in style and unmemorable in ideas. Weigl had his successes before the First World War but, in general, his music has never attracted any enthusiasm from the people who might be expected to play it (Leopold Stokowski conducted a posthumous performance of Weigl's Fifth Symphony in 1968 but that was about it).

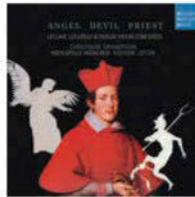
It is certainly true of this Piano Concerto for the left hand (1924), perhaps the least known of all those commissioned but never played by Paul Wittgenstein, this despite his preference for works in a conservative idiom (Weigl's is neo-Brahmsian). Perhaps the overlong first movement (18'29") and lack of virtuoso display weighed against it and the piece was not given its belated premiere until 2002, with the same soloist as on this recording.

Florian Krumpöck's playing is an efficient, accurate and personality-free zone. I fail to recognise the artist portrayed in one of the most fulsome booklet biographies I have ever read which includes the intriguing information that 'Sir Peter Ustinov presented the young musician to a broad public' (when? why?) and a quote from *Die Presse* assessing Krumpöck's debut that suggests we 'forget Lang Lang and Arcadi Volodos'.

Krumpöck abandons the keyboard to conduct David Frühwirth in Weigl's Violin Concerto (also 1924). Turned down by Adolf Busch, premiered by Josef Wolfstahl in 1930 but not given its modern-day premiere until 2009 (Philippe Graffin in Taiwan), the music meanders through its three movements without giving the soloist much of a break or the chance to truly shine. The few moments of lyrical grace in the central *Largo* are not enough to rescue it from justified oblivion. **Jeremy Nicholas**

'Angel Devil Priest'

Leclair Scylla et Glaucus - Air des démons. Violin Concerto, Op 10 No 6 Locatelli L'arte del violino, Op 3 - No 1. Concerto grosso, 'Il pianto d'Arianna', Op 7 No 6 Vivaldi Concerto for Two Violins, RV514
Chouchane Siranossian vn
Munich Hofkapelle / Rüdiger Lotter vn
Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88875 11583-2 (72' • DDD)



When it comes to Baroque violin concertos, Vivaldi's tend to get the lion's share of the limelight in comparison to those of Leclair and Locatelli, meaning that an obvious draw of this disc is the sheer obscurity of much of its repertoire. The works by Leclair and Locatelli deserve to be better known, especially the latter's D major Concerto from Op 3 – with its insertion of two show-stopping virtuoso solo capriccios around the standard three full-ensemble movements – and Leclair's lyrical G minor concerto.

The disc's solos are split between French-Armenian violinist Chouchanne Siranossian and the orchestra's director, Rüdiger Lotter, with Siranossian getting the gold in the form of those two concertos. Playing a Joseph and Antonio Gagliano violin, her period style is precise and musical, vibrato employed with restraint, and with a deft lightness of touch capable of working very different kinds of magic depending on the passage. Compare, for instance, the lilting, dance-like gentility she brings to the double-stopped solo opening of the triple-time second movement of Leclair's G minor work with the gossamer attack with which she delivers the virtuoso *bariolage* of the Capriccio I of Locatelli's D major Concerto. In the latter, a slight scratchiness creeps in as the passages rise fiendishly into the instrument's upper harmonics (tr 16, 3'25"-3'32"), but, given that Locatelli himself was described as '[bringing] forth great difficulties and [seeking] to astound the listener with his scratchy playing', it doesn't feel out of keeping. Meanwhile Lotter, on a copy of a 1741 Guarneri del Gesù made by Stefan Peter Greiner in 1996, is equally enjoyable with his ultra-clean sound, and then achieves an eminently satisfying symbiosis with Siranossian in Vivaldi's double concerto.

The orchestra itself partners the soloists sympathetically, even while the ensemble attack isn't always as defined as it could be during fast passagework, for instance in *Il pianto d'Arianna* (tr 7, 1'03"). Then, the disc's engineering works both for and against it; recorded at the Bavarian Radio studios, the continuo players are positioned close behind the soloists at the front of the sound picture to create substantial textural colour, but the wider miking of the strings occasionally feels slightly distant by comparison.

Charlotte Gardner

Chopin's 24 Preludes, Op 28

With great enthusiasm, **Nelson Goerner** opens up to Lindsay Kemp about these piano gems

Talk to Nelson Goerner for half an hour about Chopin's 24 Preludes and you'll soon get a strong idea of his enthusiasm for them: 'I can't think of any single work that represents Chopin the composer as this one does,' he declares. 'If I had to choose just one of his works (thank goodness I don't!), I would say that the greatest of him is in these preludes, every particularity of his genius. It's probably the greatest piano cycle after Beethoven.'

It is good news, then, that the Argentinian pianist, so firmly associated with Chopin's music, has now recorded this extraordinary sequence of 24 short, intensely poetic pieces in all the major and minor keys, begun by Chopin in Paris in 1838 and completed during his rain-sodden holiday with George Sand in Majorca that winter. The recording, for Alpha, was made in August at a live concert in the Krzysztof Penderecki European Centre for Music in Luslawice, Poland, and here he is now with the score open on the table in front

of him, hurriedly flipping through the pages to make his point. 'I mean, you get intimacy, but also an epic quality, like in the ballades. Then you get pieces that are like small études, or an incredible piece like No 2, which is, what, 50 years ahead of its time harmonically speaking? You have mazurkas in Nos 7 and 10, or ones that really are like preludes in compositional terms, such as No 16 with its ostinato bass. And you have ones that are really "finished" and accomplished, like No 15 [the famous Raindrop], which is like a kind of alternative study for what the Barcarolle [Op 60] might have been.'

Today, when there are examples by Debussy, Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Shostakovich, we are familiar with the concept of a piano prelude, but Chopin was probably the first to use the term to describe this kind of piece – short, non-programmatic and seemingly concerned primarily with what we might call the *idea* of piano music. The exploration



Nelson Goerner: 'It has always been one of my dreams to record the Chopin Preludes live, all in one go'

of all the keys may link Chopin's Op 28 to the 48 Preludes and Fugues of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, but unlike in Bach, these are preludes to nothing – unless it be to the next prelude. 'We don't know if Chopin intended the preludes to be played as a cycle,' warns Goerner, 'but it works wonderfully as one. I've never done them without playing the set in its entirety. It's always been one of my dreams to record them live. It has to be in one go, because it is a journey. Recording it in the studio, breaking up the set and doing it prelude by prelude or in sections of four, would have been a nightmare for me. I think of it as a cycle to be recorded live.'

For Goerner, this problem of maintaining the set's sense of unity and momentum in the face of its enormous psychological variety is the greatest challenge in performing it. 'You have to be able to create the mood in a split second, and that's so difficult. Take No 1, which starts with this



The historical view

Franz Liszt

Gazette musicale concert review (May 2, 1841)

'Chopin's Preludes are compositions of an order entirely apart...they are poetic preludes, analogous to those of a great contemporary poet, who cradles the soul in golden dreams, and elevates it to the regions of the ideal.'

George Sand

Histoire de ma vie (1855)

'[His] gift is [the expression of] the deepest and fullest feelings and emotions...He made a single instrument speak a language of infinity. He could sum up, in 10 lines that a child could play, poems of boundless exaltation, dramas of unequalled power.'

André Gide

Notes sur Chopin (1948)

'Each [prelude] creates a particular atmosphere, establishes an emotional setting then fades out as a bird alights. All is still. Not all are of equal importance. Some are charming, others terrifying. None is indifferent.'

climbing phrase – for that you need some sort of preparation beforehand! It also needs to be *cantabile*, so shouldn't be rushed, but at the same time it's *agitato*, and later on *stretto*. That's quite an emotional challenge, and a pianistic one as well because you have to get straight in – feel warm and inside the music before it's gone.'

Like many of these preludes, this one lasts less than a minute. 'But there is a double challenge,' continues Goerner, 'because there is this fantastic arc, a journey from the first prelude to the last that's also so unpredictable. After the first prelude you wouldn't expect to hear a piece like the second one, which could be part of a song, so gloomy and dark, with this incredible dissonant left hand. And from this you go to No 3, which is more salon-like – it's so fresh and so spring-like, and the pianist can charm his audience with it. And then you get on to No 4 [the well-known, exquisitely plaintive one in E minor], which is so different from No 5, which could be a little étude or something that maybe the composer wouldn't think much of, but is so charming, so full of twists and turns and so melodic.'

'At the Presto con fuoco No 16, in just a few bars, Chopin can create the complexity of a whole act of Wagner!'

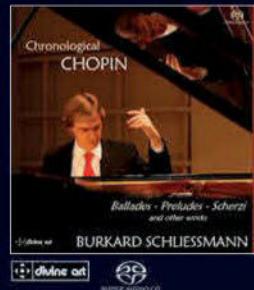
You get the feeling that as he pores over the pages Goerner could stop at any one of these extraordinary pieces and express his admiration for it. Reaching the *Raindrop*, he marvels at its middle section: 'It's just amazing, because you have just one bar to get from this beautiful *bel canto, legato* line to something in the depths of the keyboard coming from you don't know where. It's just magic in its intensity.' Then, at the *Presto con fuoco* No 16: 'Does it not have great demonic fire? All the feeling of tragedy, of living, is in there. Every note counts – nothing is for the sake of virtuosity. These right-hand semiquavers are no longer just runs, they are music of real emotional intensity. In a few bars Chopin can create the complexity of a whole act of Wagner!'

But if such talk suggests that the preludes are as Romantic as could be, there is still that Bach connection. Chopin revered Bach and had *The Well-Tempered Clavier* with him in Majorca, and as Goerner points out, 'You could think of the preludes as a Bach tribute in the sense that there is not one note too many. The set is perfect in its unity, so Classical in background, no matter how Romantic it is as a piano cycle. Mozart and Bach were the composers he loved the most, so even when he is at his most Romantic he never indulges in excess. He was the most aristocratic and noble of composers, and yes his essence is Romantic, but at the same time it's Classical – there is a feeling of structure that is so important in his music. That's important for the performer to keep in mind, because otherwise you don't get the right Chopin.'

Goerner's copy of the score is a well-thumbed but surprisingly clean one, the most prominent markings being pencilled suggestions, largely practical ones, written in 25 years or so ago by his teacher Maria Tipó. 'I'm not a massive writer on scores,' he explains. 'We are always evolving, and when something is marked on the score it is a memory of what you did before. I don't want to be conditioned by that. To see what I've done in the past is no longer of interest to me. This is work for life!' **G**

► To read Gramophone's review of Goerner's CD turn to page 61

New Releases



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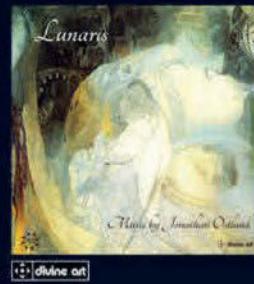
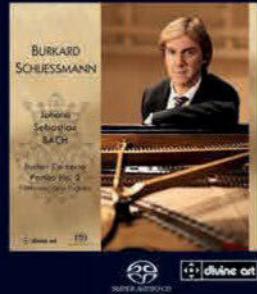
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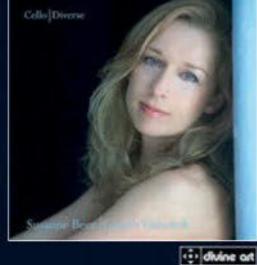
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Lindsay Kemp on Telemann from Pamela Thorby and Erik Bosgraaf:

'She shows her alertness to the music's variety by ringing the changes in her continuo department' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



Hannah Nepil listens to a tribute to musical Armenia:

'It's easy to agree with Debussy, who declared that Komitas deserved to be recognised as a great composer' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**

Brahms · Dvořák

Brahms String Quintet No 2, Op 111 **Dvořák**

String Quintet No 3, 'American', Op 97 B180

Boris Garlitsky, Jaha Lee vns Kyoungmin Park,

Georgy Kovalev vas Philip Graham vc

Oehms ® OC1829 (60' • DDD)

Brahms · Mozart

Brahms String Quintet No 2, Op 111

Mozart String Quintet No 3, K515

Voce Quartet with Lise Berthaud va

Alpha ® ALPHA214 (60' • DDD)



Brahms, like Mozart, seems to have been happier with quintets than with quartets. It's no surprise that chamber groups want to record the second of his two string quintets: can there be many more thrilling openings to a piece of chamber music? The Oehms disc stems from a week-long project under the aegis of the Villa Musica Foundation in Engers, near Koblenz, at which young musicians partake in intensive rehearsals with established players, culminating in concerts and, as in this case, recordings.

The contrast with the Quatuor Voce, an ensemble founded a decade ago, is instructive. While Boris Garlitsky and his young players present a well-played reading, the Voce and guest viola player Lise Berthaud offer one that has been refined through repeated performance. They know the architecture of the music from the inside, and are aware of those places where a little time can be given to a phrase, where the music can be allowed to breathe a bit more. Their opening movement is a full half a minute longer than Garlitsky's but is no less taut and compelling. Listen to the arrival of the second subject, where the tempo relaxes subtly and the commentary in the violins is lit in half-lights, while Garlitsky and Jaha Lee play it as if it is the major line at that point. Both valid perspectives, to be sure,

but the greater shading of the Voce's performance draws one in all the more.

The other movements are all a notch speedier on the Voce's disc, and their grasp of the knotty Intermezzo is the more secure – as is, it must be said, their intonation. It's a more rounded, complete performance, while the outsize characters among Garlitsky's ensemble would appear to be the veteran leader himself and the German cellist Philip Graham, who in many places appears to be leading, as it were, from the bottom.

Both discs precede the Brahms with a late quintet for the same combination (doubled viola, rather than doubled cello à la Schubert). Garlitsky et al give a suitably majestic and vivacious reading of Dvořák's 1893 *American* Quintet, fusing the composer's Slavic and American styles, while the Voce's choice is a spacious, airy Mozart C major – the 1787 work that supposedly so inspired Schubert. Both discs offer an hour of pleasurable music-making, although the Voce Quartet and Lise Berthaud shade it in the Brahms. **David Threasher**

Lalo

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 7; No 2; No 3, Op 26

Leonore Piano Trio

Hyperion ® CDA68113 (79' • DDD)



The spirits of both Mendelssohn and Schumann haunt Edouard Lalo's three piano trios. In the third of them there is also a hint of something weightier in the manner of Brahms, but none of them reveals any vestige of influence from Lalo's native France.

Lalo is principally known these days for his five-movement *Symphonie espagnole*, a violin concerto that capitalises on his own knowledge of the instrument as violinist in the Armingaud Quartet, which was at the forefront of reviving France's interest in chamber music from the mid-1850s onwards. As these luminous performances of the piano trios reveal, Lalo looked to

Germany for his inspiration at a time when there was not much in France to be inspired by in the realms of chamber music.

But the influences are lightly worn: nods to Mendelssohn and Schumann in terms of gesture, texture and melodic contour – as, for example, in the song-without-words-like slow movement of the First Trio in C minor – can be heard coursing through this music, but there is something of Lalo's own in the lightness of touch, the elegance and what his biographer Georges Servières called the 'chaste tenderness free of sentimentality and a burning passion relieved of unwholesome eroticism'. The burning passion is ignited more in the third of the trios than in the other two, and it is something that the Leonore Trio harness to striking effect. The suavity of playing is another key factor in lending all three trios the polish and panache that they merit.

Geoffrey Norris

Moszkowski

Five Spanish Dances (arr Sauret). Four Pieces, Op 82. Zwei Concertstücke, Op 16. Suite for Two Violins, Op 71. Etincelles, Op 36 No 6

(arr Heifetz). Guitarre, Op 45 No 2 (transcr Sarasate). Serenata (arr Rehfeld) **Nazrin Rashidova vns Daniel Grimwood pf**

Naxos ® 8 573410 (78' • DDD)



This invaluable selection revives three of Moszkowski's works for violin and piano (the composer was a fine violinist as well as a virtuoso pianist), bookended with transcriptions by virtuoso violinists of some piano works. The most impressive example of the former is the Suite for two violins, Op 71 (1903), four melodic, beautifully crafted movements which in style and substance are in no way inferior to anything of the sort Saint-Saëns might have written. It is a puzzle why more violinists have not taken it up, especially after it was championed in the 1970s by Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zukerman and



The Leonore Piano Trio: polish and panache in Lalo's chamber music

pianist Samuel Sanders (now available as a single CD or as part of Warner Classics' 70th-birthday tribute to Perlman – A/15). Here Nazrin Rashidova duets with herself in a performance that, if it does not have quite the same panache, falls not far short, and is certainly the equal of Ilya Gringolts, Alexander Bulov and Irina Ryumina (BIS, 2/00) and less in-your-face than Urban Svensson, Jorgen Svensson and Per Tengstrand (Chamber Sound). Only slightly less appealing are the once-popular Ballade and Bolero that constitute the earlier *Zwei Concertstücke* (1878), and the Four Pieces, Op 82 (1909). The last of these, 'Humoresque', must surely find favour as a lively encore.

The transcriptions highlight Moszkowski's wonderful melodic gift and zest for life (who has not bashed their way through the *Spanish Dances* and come away feeling better for it?). Rashidova is an accomplished player and has assembled a programme that might inspire some of her peers. Is her tone always as alluring as it could be? No. And Daniel Grimwood, fine pianist as he is, can be a little too self-effacing. I should have welcomed a more forward placing in the balance. But no matter: the aplomb and character of this excellent duo's playing carry the day.

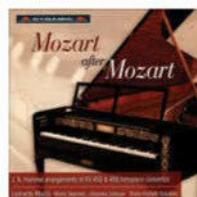
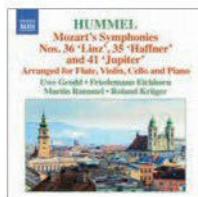
Jeremy Nicholas

Mozart

Symphonies - No 35, 'Haffner', K385; No 36, 'Linz', K425; No 41, 'Jupiter', K551 (arr Hummel)
Uwe Grodd fl Friedemann Eichhorn vn
Martin Rummel vc Roland Krüger pf
 Naxos 8 572842 (71' • DDD)

Mozart

Piano Concertos - No 18, K456; No 20, K466
 (arr Hummel)
Martin Skamletz fl Johannes Gebauer vn
Bruno Hurtado Gosalvez vc Leonardo Miucci fp
 Dynamic CDS7723 (64' • DDD)



During the 18th and 19th centuries, it was common practice to make chamber or solo arrangements of orchestral works to cater to the burgeoning middle class. Extra sales of a large-scale work could be secured by offering it in a form that could be played in the drawing rooms of the well-off, so composers themselves or copyists prepared versions for small groups: piano solo or duet, piano trio, quartet and so on – making the practice the Spotify of its day. The arrival of recordings naturally enough put paid to these

arrangements and now, when everything imaginable can be accessed at the click of a mouse or the swipe of a screen, their day seems well and truly to have passed.

So what is the point of making recordings of Mozart's symphonies and piano concertos in chamber arrangements, when the listener barely even needs to rise from his chair to be able to hear hundreds of performances of the orchestral originals? Well, these reimaginings are a little different as they were made by Hummel, himself a pupil of Mozart's, during the 1820s and '30s, rather than by a jobbing scribe in the pay of a publishing house. In the case of the symphonies, they are by and large straight transcriptions – Hummel's adulation of Mozart was such that he refused to make any cuts or change a single harmony. The concertos go somewhat further: they appear to be based on solo versions Hummel made to suit his own formidable technique and, while not altering the architecture of the works, he rather beefed up the soloist's part.

It's the piano that gets the lion's share throughout, with the strings and flute often just providing accompaniment. The *Haffner* and *Linz* Symphonies sound much as you might expect but the *Jupiter* presents a far greater challenge to the arranger, not least in the fearsome counterpoint of the finale. In fact this put me most in mind of



Violinist Noé Inui has recorded sonatas by Schumann and Richard Strauss for his new album on Navis Classics

the fugal coda in the finale of Schumann's Piano Quintet. It really is a *tour de force*, negotiated admirably by the Naxos musicians, who offer nothing less than tasteful readings. Hummel (by necessity) left out the horn and trumpet parts – the few moments when it seem a little bare. On its own terms, a fine achievement. (The same players previously recorded Symphonies Nos 38-41.)

The concertos are played on period instruments for a sparser sound, Leonardo Miucci's copy of a Viennese fortepiano from the mid-1810s having enough body in the low and middle ranges but lacking tone and sustain above the treble stave. The cadenzas (and ornamentations) are naturally Hummel's own, offering an insight into the state of the practice in the early 19th century. It would be interesting to hear these arrangements in their solo piano versions: the austere, vibrato-free strings and flute don't really add a great deal.

So who are these discs for? Those interested in Mozart performance practice in the 19th century; Hummel completists too. But Mozartians will surely have their own favourite recordings of all these works in their original forms.

David Threasher

Schubert

Fantaisie, D940. Variations on an Original Theme, D813. Allegro, 'Lebensstürme', D947. Andantino varié, D823

Claire Désert, Emmanuel Strosser *pft*
Mirare  MIR280 (57' • DDD)



Debate often rages here at Gramophone Towers: do piano duets get reviewed in the Instrumental or Chamber sections of the magazine? After all, it's two players, even if it's only one instrument. Perhaps the purpose for which the music was written should dictate. Schubert may have composed many of his duets as teaching tools but his pupils were often young ladies with whom he supposedly sought some sort of romantic entanglement – hence the many occasions on which the two players link arms. So, as music for friends or even (putative) lovers, duets are the purest form of chamber music.

I don't know if there is any such romantic connection between Mlle Désert and M Strosser but they offer a finely played programme of some

of Schubert's better-known duets – the two masterpieces from the composer's final year, the *Lebensstürme* Allegro and F minor *Fantasie*, along with the A flat Variations that Britten and Richter made into a party piece and the little *Andantino varié*. They're clearly good friends at least, as their performances are finely reactive, sensitive to that troubled strain in Schubert that so often undercuts the Biedermeier *Gemütlichkeit* of the music. Even the Variations, so often presented as little more than a straight-backed academic exercise, are here raised to a loftier plane.

I wonder if sometimes – say, during the tortuous harmonic and contrapuntal excursions in the *Allegro vivace* of the *Fantasie* – the notes are spun rather than expressed in the manner of Maria João Pires and Ricardo Castro (DG, 5/05) or Paul Lewis and Steven Osborne (Hyperion, 12/10). Perhaps the British pair are more rhythmically incisive in the *Lebensstürme*, not that Désert and Strosser short-change its emotional range. The Schumann-esque meanderings of the *Andantino*, too, are beautifully shaped. A fine-sounding piano adds to the attractions of this really rather lovely disc. **David Threasher**

Schumann · Janáček · Mendelssohn

Janáček Violin Sonata Mendelssohn Violin Sonata (1838) Schumann Violin Sonata No 2, Op 121
Simone Lamsma vn Robert Kulek pf
Challenge Classics F CC72677
(74' • DDD/DSD)

Schumann · R Strauss

'The First and the Last Romantic'
Schumann Violin Sonata No 2, Op 121
R Strauss Violin Sonata
Noé Inui vn Vassilis Varvaresos pf
Navis F NC15004 (63' • DDD)



Whether one can hear shades of Schumann's nervous collapse within his D minor Violin Sonata is very much up for discussion, but what is indisputable is the emotional and stylistic range of this ambitious four-movement work, not to mention its sheer soul. So, as the overlapping element between these two young violinists' recordings, it's given me some particularly pleasure-filled and fascinating listening. For, while you couldn't put a whisker between their tempi, that's where the similarities end.

There's an exciting, on-the-edge quality to the Schumann's first movement under the fingers of Dutch violinist Simone Lamsma (on the 'Mlynarski' Stradivarius of 1716). Sonorous of timbre, with her bow really biting the strings on those first double-stopped chords, it's a big, bold performance with just a hint of internal torture about it, matched perfectly by Robert Kulek on the piano. The contrast between her and Greek-Japanese violinist Noé Inui (on a Tommaso Balestrieri instrument of 1764) couldn't be much more pronounced; miked slightly wider, his opening is elegant, controlled and softer of attack. Notable from the off is a sense of real partnership with pianist Vassilis Varvaresos.

The comparisons get really interesting in the work's third-movement chorale variations, though. Noé's reading of the first bowed presentation of the theme (1'01") is almost classical in its poise, his tone a bright, clear A-string one. Lamsma meanwhile has gone for an intense, husky, covered-sounding tone (1'01"), and actually from here on it's through Lamsma's colourings that a sense of developing narrative is most keenly felt, beginning with the way in which her tone flowers into the ensuing double-stopped section (1'55"). Not that Inui isn't

thinking of narrative, I should say; when the theme appears in high, thin, tortured minor-key form he throws us an eerie surprise, delivering it in a far-from-beautiful – menacing, even – bow-near-the-bridge scratchy whisper (3'06"). Lamsma is far tamer at the same moment, opting simply for thinner-toned, plaintive beauty (2'58"). Then, both recapitulations sound like a relieved, tender homecoming in their own particular ways. And that's the thing: they're just very, very different. Perhaps Lamsma's warmer, expansive, more passionate reading ultimately gets closer to Schumann but there's something undeniably attractive about Inui's lighter, leaner interpretation.

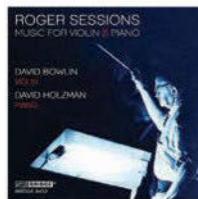
Inui and Varvaresos have paired their Schumann with Richard Strauss's early Sonata in E flat, but there's no marked difference in their approaches towards 'The First and the Last Romantic'. Their Strauss sounds pleasant, controlled and elegant, but I'd have enjoyed some less studied, more impetuous moments.

The other pair make a better fist of their own Romantic contrasts. Lamsma is effortless, crystalline and supple in the outer movements of Mendelssohn's F major Sonata, punctuated by a simple, sincere *Adagio* in which Kulek in particular shines. Then it's all change again as she adopts a slightly wild, Slavic singing quality for Janáček's 1914 work. Ultimately, Lamsma's recording is the one that most convincingly does what it says on the tin, ie 'epitomises three key stages in the history of Romanticism'. Still, though, Inui's Schumann does linger in the mind.

Charlotte Gardner

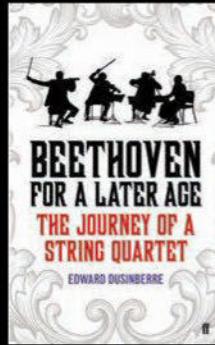
Sessions

Duo^a. Adagio^b. Waltz for Brenda^b.
Sonata for Violin^c. Second Sonata^b
^{ac}**David Bowlin vn ab David Holzman pf**
Bridge F BRIDGE9453 (62' • DDD)



He was unfashionable before anyone knew who he was. As Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen were advancing their arguments about the serial organisation of sound, Roger Sessions, in 1953, two years after Schoenberg's death, was getting hip to dodecaphony by implanting 12-note procedures inside his unaccompanied Sonata for Violin. But here's the rub – the resulting piece actually sounds less self-consciously 'modernist' than his 1942 Duo for violin and piano, which bumps together influences from Ives, Hindemith and Stravinsky but ends up sounding like proto-

An EFG Gramophone conversation



When asked about the meaning of the late string quartets Beethoven famously remarked 'Oh those are not for you, they are for a later age.'

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Recorder player Pamela Thorby rings the changes with her continuo group on her new Linn album of Telemann sonatas

Elliott Carter. Sessions's Duo and Sonata for Violin are the centrepieces of this immaculately recorded and intrepidly played disc documenting all his chamber music for violin with, as a bonus, a ferociously dynamic performance of his gnarly, brawny Second Piano Sonata (1946) and a couple of piano miniatures.

Implausibly enough, the material that Sessions would eventually fashion into the Sonata was conceived originally as a symphony, which helps explain its four-movement structure and ambitious scale. Gesturally, it's as boldly chiselled and in-your-face as Mount Rushmore. The clarity of Bach's solo string music was palpably a guiding light, but in both Duo and Sonata Sessions relishes throwing his material over the cliff edge – shock moments of freefall that contrast winningly against the general air of serious-minded formality.

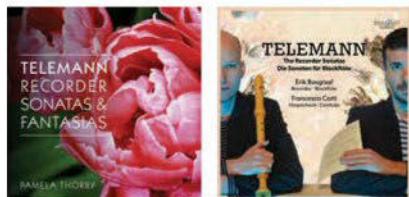
In the Duo counterpoint goes abruptly rogue, wriggling free of formal constraints. Elsewhere, holes are suddenly punched in the flow and, midway, the mother of all pedal points leads to a full-stop, then a jolting reboot. David Holzman and David Bowlin capture all the beautiful instability of a composer well worth catching up with – even if you're fashionably late. **Philip Clark**

Telemann

Sonatas, TWV41 - B3; B4; C2; C5; d4; f1; F2.
Twelve Solo Fantasias Without Bass, TWV40:2-13
Pamela Thorby rec
Peter Whelan bn **Alison McGillivray** vc **Elizabeth Kenny** archlute/gtr **Marcin Świątkiewicz** hpd/org
Linn ② CKD476 (111' • DDD)

Telemann

Sonatas, TWV41 - a4; B3; C2; C5; c2; d4; f1; F2; f2
Erik Bosgraaf rec **Francesco Corti** hpd
Brilliant ② 95247 (66' • DDD)



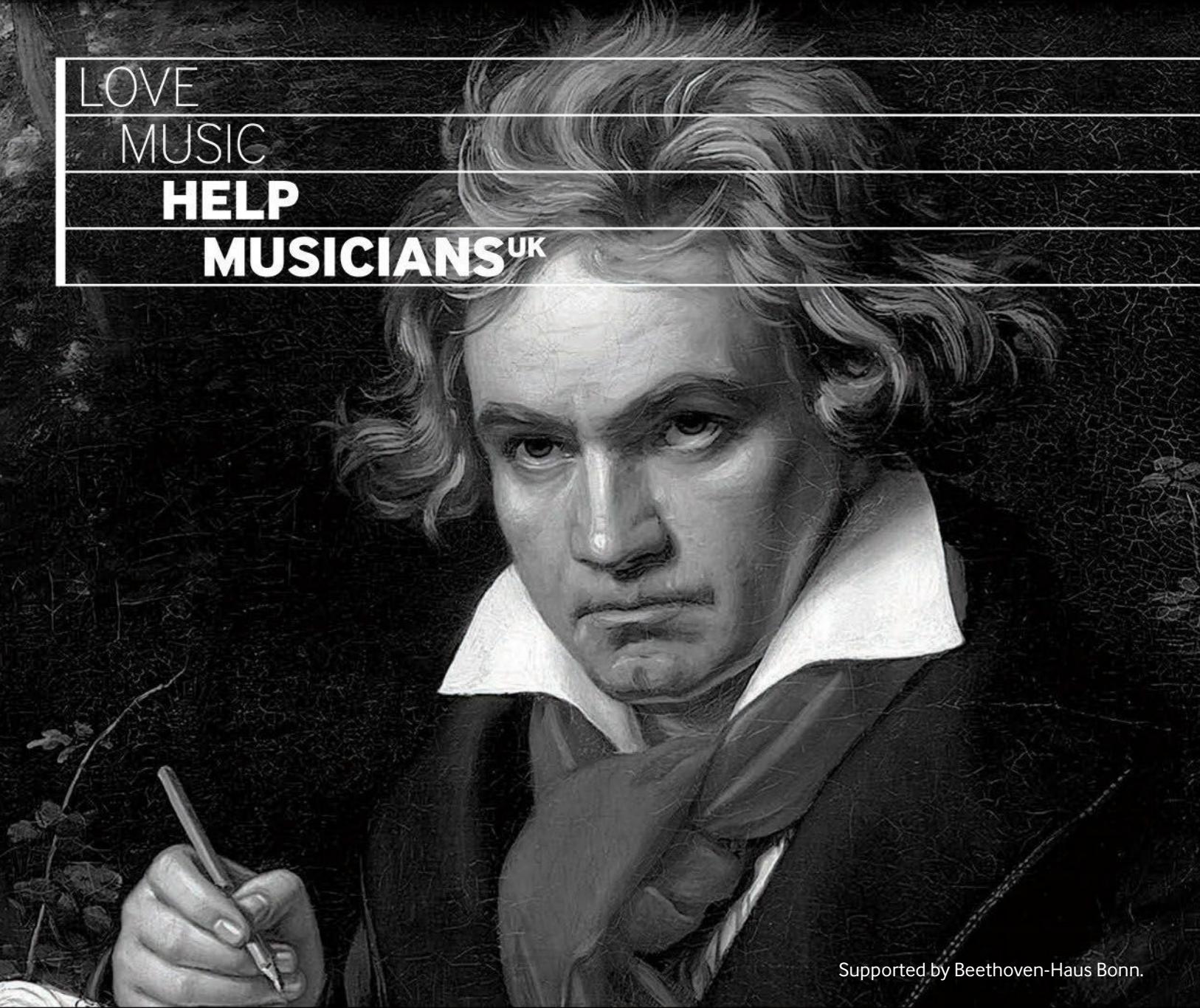
Pamela Thorby's new two-disc set looks at first glance pretty hardcore: one disc of sonatas with continuo and a second of solo fantasias (originally for flute), all by Telemann, might just look like recorder overload. Yet that would be forgetting the ever-engaging personas of composer and interpreter. Telemann organised his published music with Bachian rigour to illustrate a range of styles and formal types – dances, fugues, arias, preludes, etc – but he also let his voice speak out in every bar;

there's always something going on, and we are never on autopilot.

Thorby shows her alertness to the music's variety by ringing the changes in her continuo department of cello, lute, guitar, bassoon and harpsichord, and in the fantasias from the sheer interpretative intelligence and authority with which she shapes them. Telemann's 'solo polyphony' is in many ways clearer and more readily comprehended than Bach's, which may well have the effect for the performer of making it easier to stay in touch with its underlying Baroque manners. Whatever, it is certain that Thorby finds the character of each piece thanks to a command of articulation, rhetorical timing and spontaneity that seems totally innate – you feel that, far from 'applying' an interpretation to it, she simply can't help herself. Her continuo partners in the sonatas are classy, by the way, but special mention goes to the lyrical and gentlemanly bassoon of Peter Whelan.

As it happens, Erik Bosgraaf also recorded Telemann's solo fantasias for Brilliant back in 2008, dancing through them with graceful ease. His new disc of sonatas has five in common with Thorby's, though with just a harpsichord for accompaniment, so clearly it offers less colour than her continuo team, the fullness and resourcefulness of Francesco

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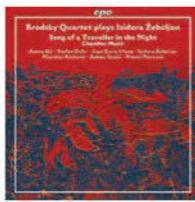


Kristóf Baráti: spine-tingling encore pieces on the 'Lady Harmsworth' Strad (review on page 57)

Corti's playing notwithstanding, Bosgraaf's technical command is again of a high (sometimes dazzling) order, including a more even tone across the compass than Thorby's, which doubtless results in greater overall comfort to the ear but also perhaps a tendency to whizz over the surface at moments where Thorby has interesting points to make. The churchy recording is also a factor in making these performances, undeniably exciting for their virtuoso flair, seem a little distanced and impersonal compared to the more intimate passion of Thorby. Both, however, are bound to please in their way. **Lindsay Kemp**

Žebeljan

Polomka Quartet. Dance of the Wooden Sticks^a. New Songs of Lada^b. Sarabande^c. A Yawl on the Danube^d. Song of a Traveller in the Night^e. Pep it up^f. **Brodsky Quartet** with ^{bdf}Aneta Ilić sop ^eJoan Enric Lluna cl^aStefan Dohr hn ^bBoban Stošić db ^{cdf}Isidora Žebeljan pf ^dMiroslav Karlović perc / **Premil Petrović** CPO (F) CPO777 994-2 (56' • DDD)



Isidora Žebeljan (b1967) grew up in a rural part of Serbia near the Carpathian mountains, where folk music criss-crossed between Hungary, Romania and the rest of

the Balkans. Her works are packed with fiery energy and the tricksy dance rhythms of home; she has orchestrated music from Emir Kusturica films and shares that director's panache for hectic zaniness and heightened reality. Her music spins off impetuously, unpredictably, with an unshackled verve that this chamber collection taps into with exactly the right kind of abandon. At the heart of the album is the Brodsky Quartet, an ensemble for whom Žebeljan has often written. It's easy to hear why: their lithe and dauntless attack is an ideal fit, and they can flit from fleet-foot dances to ethereal elegies without sounding forced or studied. They're good with endings, too, which Žebeljan often leaves gleefully abrupt and unceremonious.

The disc opens with the single-movement quartet *Polomka* (2009/11), based on a swirling, athletic Balkan dance. Rhythms are skittish and unpindownable, thrown off kilter by rogue triple-time bars that delay the next down-beat by a microsecond – possible to feel if not to count. The *New Songs of Lada* is a rich-hued cycle for soprano and string quartet. Here the music grows more expansive and expressive, more sensual and intimate, but it's still sparkly and always laced with that thrilling sense that anything could happen. Soprano Aneta Ilić is yearning, restive, rapt and fierce.

Sarabande (2005) is a piano version of incidental music Žebeljan wrote for a

Sartre play. It's delicate and suspended, rocking gently on a simple ostinato in the bass, and the composer plays it with beautiful understatement. *Pep it up* (1989) is the earliest work in the collection, full of grimy percussion and wordless soprano elegies. The joints are maybe clunkier than in later works but it's fascinating to hear the confidence and imagination with which Žebeljan was throwing about rhythms even then. **Kate Molleson**

'Danish Romantic Piano Trios'

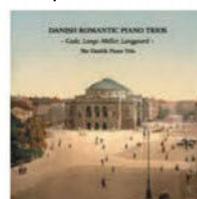
Gade Piano Trio, Op 42. Piano Trio Movement
Langgaard Fjeldblomster (Mountain Flowers)
Lange-Müller Piano Trio, Op 53
The Danish Piano Trio
Dacapo (F) 8 226119 (75' • DDD)

'Five Danish Piano Trios'

Gudmundsen-Holmgreen Moments musicaux
Hegaard Like a Cube of Silence **Koch** Piano Trio
SH Nielsen Divertimento **Nørholm** Piano Trio
No 3, 'Essai in memoriam', Op 155

Trio Ismene

Dacapo (F) 8 226583 (71' • DDD)



Two discs from two Danish ensembles coincide to chart the history of the piano trio in the country from its arrival in the mid-1800s. The big cheese of 19th-century Danish music, Niels Gade, was among the first to pounce on it. Gade was a fine violinist (Schumann noted the link with his surname and the instrument's four strings) but was not so hot on keys, which might contribute to the slightly heavy, stop-start feel that stalks his B flat Piano Trio (1863). We also hear the first movement of an aborted trio from 1839, planned as a programmatic piece based on a heroic adventure. Ironically, the narrative framework might have freed Gade up to worry less about thematic development – a benefit when his themes never quite have the directness of his chum Mendelssohn's. A charming piece that feels more at ease with itself, though in both works Gade's sturdy craftsmanship is clear.

In the self-effacing Peter Erasmus Lange-Müller you almost always hear something different: unusual harmonic glances, an attractive sense of hesitance and, in the case of his F minor Piano Trio (1898), a distinct French influence. The piece rises to a powerful climax in the last movement, Lange-Müller standing tall at last, shouting to be heard over the rest of them. Fans of the crazy Dane Rued Langgaard will recognise the music of *Mountain Flowers* (1908) as the basis for the second movement of his First Symphony. Good stuff, but Langgaard was right to recognise that the material suited broad orchestral clothing better. The piano takes prominence in the sound picture, which would be more frustrating were Katrine Gislinge's playing not so full of fluency and tenderness.

Five living composers are represented on 'Five Danish Piano Trios', three of whom studied with Ib Nørholm, one of whom holidays with Ib Nørholm and one of whom is Ib Nørholm. The clearest link to Gade & Co is Svend Hvidfelt Nielsen's *Divertimento* (1993), which could be a Romantic piano trio in modernist harmonic

disguise; its sensitive 'Elegy' gets a touching, gentle performance from Trio Ismena, who probably have the edge on their compatriots in terms of tone and shading. We also get Jesper Koch's Piano Trio (2011), based on shapes and games, and, from Nørholm himself, Trio No 3 (1999), lyrical and angular, its energy contained.

Lars Hegaard's *Like a Cube of Silence* (2010) is direct and refreshing, like a structure whose parts you can see, music slightly apart from Denmark's modernist establishment in expression yet absolutely sharing its clarity and openness. But the standout work comes from Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen. He compiled his *Moments musicaux* (2006) from bits of Schubert, piling quotations on top of one another after he'd found that he'd 'destroyed Schubert by cutting him up'. The result is typical of this composer's new simplicity: jagged, playful, sometimes ugly, often unspeakably beautiful, always full of a natural, genre-less musical impulse. And when all's said and done, Gudmundsen-Holmgreen does underline Schubert's simple harmonic profundity, such as when the piano loops a sequence of chords from Schubert's *Moments* in the last movement like an organ accompanying an Anglican psalm chant, stutters and figurations typical of PGH fidgeting away up above. The piece is worth the price of the disc alone, and suggests that Nielsen's legacy of individuality has eclipsed Gade's ideas of conformity when it comes to Denmark's most worthy 21st-century music.

Andrew Mellor

'My Armenia'

Babadjanian Six Pictures Bagdasaryan

Rhapsody^a. Nocturne^b **Khachaturian** Gayane - Two Dances^a. Poem-song^a **Mirzoyan** Introduction and Perpetuum mobile^a **Komitas** Seven Folk

Dances. Garun-a (It is spring). Krunk (The Crane)^a.

Tsiran-i tsar (The Apricot Tree)^a

Sergey Khachaturyan vn **Lusine Khachaturyan** pf

Naïve F V5414 (80' • DDD)



As far as Armenians are concerned, music is inextricably bound up with loss. Every year, they gather to pay respects to those who died in the Armenian genocide and to sing works by Komitas Vardapet, for many a symbol of nationalist pride. Though Komitas himself survived the massacres, he was also a victim of the persecution, and eventually suffered a mental breakdown. Outside Armenia, people now might struggle to recognise his name.

So it's fitting that Sergey and Lusine Khachaturyan have chosen him to headline this survey of 20th-century Armenian composers, marking the 100th anniversary of the genocide. Listening to the brother-and-sister duo, whose own great-grandfather survived the events of 1915, one marvels at Komitas's emotional depth. In *The Crane*, perhaps his best-known work, we hear music of lacerating passion. And, throughout the *Seven Folk Dances*, crystalline piano pieces that seems to melt to the touch, Komitas reveals himself as the Armenian equivalent of Bartók: someone who could take the simplest folk material and turn it into sophisticated polyphony. It's easy to agree with Debussy, who once declared on the basis of a single song that Komitas deserved to be recognised as a great composer.

The Khachaturians eagerly embrace Komitas's voice, by turns white-hot and icy cold. But perhaps the main achievement of this disc is the way it profiles a melting-pot of influences through the works of just five composers. At various points we hear the stamp of the Second Viennese School – in the spiky *Six Pictures* for piano by Arno Babadjanian, and the troubled world of the *Introduction and Perpetuum mobile* by Edvard Mirzoyan, who died only three years ago. Occasionally, as in Eduard Bagdasaryan's fire-bellied Rhapsody, the colours are startlingly akin to Debussy's. At the core,

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THE GERMAN BAROQUE

Fabrice Fitch listens to a selection of discs of chamber works from lesser-known Baroque composers of the German-speaking lands

Even chamber recordings of the German Baroque and not a note of Biber, Bach (JS) or Handel, and hardly any Telemann! True, the Bach family is represented by all but one of Sebastian's composing sons, and much of the best music in this round-up comes from them; but even when the music isn't quite top-notch there's much pleasure to be derived from the diversity and individuality of the instruments used. It's also good to acknowledge the efforts of several up-and-coming young ensembles on behalf of composers whose present obscurity is often undeserved.

One of the most obscure is **Romanus Weichlein**, whose two published opus numbers straddle the turn of the 18th century. His neglect is apparently under revision by scholars and performers alike, and to judge by the selection from his Op 1, this reappraisal seems perfectly justified. These sonatas are very characterful, with an elfin approach to form and pacing reminiscent of Biber, from whom he appears to have learnt much. The selections from the set are complemented by equally fine pieces from better-known contemporaries (Kuhnau, Muffat, Kerl and Böhm – I particularly enjoyed the latter's D minor keyboard Capriccio). The string band Ensemble Masques are consummate, persuasive advocates: 'elfin' might as well also describe their performances, and I should like to hear more from them, and from Weichlein.

I am, however, rather less persuaded of the merits of Weichlein's contemporary Philipp Erlebach, two of whose sonatas are featured in the collection **Bound to Nothing** from Fantasticus, a trio consisting of violin, viola da gamba and continuo. The programme explores 'the German Stylus Fantasticus' – a worthwhile theme, but the actual music left me rather disappointed, despite the presence of Buxtehude. Perhaps I was expecting more incident of the sort that Froberger or indeed Biber might supply. The performances are less sure-footed than one might expect from a young ensemble whose previous projects have met with acclaim, in these pages and elsewhere: tone and intonation sometimes slip, particularly when the instruments find themselves in their upper reaches.

One is on safer ground with a prosaically titled collection, **Treasures of the German Baroque** from the Netherlands-based Radio Antiqua, for which one skips a generation or so. The *style galant* is here in full swing with Pisendel, Telemann, Reichenauer and the London-based Frenchman Dieupart (whose suites, one of which is heard here, may have contributed to forming JS Bach's tastes in the genre). In comparison with the earlier recordings there is much grace but also rather less whimsy; but at their not infrequent best, Radio Antiqua are as pleasant and graceful as the music they serve. The combination of cello, harpsichord and theorbo on continuo is capable of shifting from delicacy to surprising power and fullness in the blink of an eye, but it is Isabel Favilla's bassoon that steals the show, particularly in the trio sonata by Christoph Schaffrath, whose contemporary renown one can begin to appreciate through performances like this one.

CPE Bach figures prominently in the next three recordings. The recitals from Lucile Boulanger and Elinor Frey focus on the court of Frederick the Great and make a fascinating pairing, pitting the viola da gamba against a rarer instrument, the five-string cello. As Frey acknowledges in her fine booklet-note, there is no documentary evidence for the use of the five-string instrument in the Berlin repertory, but style and technique convince her of its validity. Both are accompanied on fortepianos (copies of Silbermann and Cristofori for Boulanger's accompanist Arnaud de Pasquale, and an original Silbermann for Lorenzo Ghielmi, who accompanies Frey). The viol's more acidulated tone blends with the fortepiano very readily, especially when both are in their lower range, whereas the distinction between soloist and accompanist is more easily maintained with the cello. In performance terms there is very little to choose between the two recordings: the rapport between soloist and accompanist is equally sympathetic, and both soloists inspire confidence throughout. Both programmes are also



Der Musikalische Garten: Baroque in the Blue House

nicely, albeit differently, contrasted. Apart from a rare opportunity to hear JCF, the least performed of JS Bach's sons, Ghielmi gets a solo cameo, and an exotic stop is briefly heard on the fortepiano, which approximates to the sound of the dulcimer. (There's also a great variety of timbres in Boulanger's recital, albeit not quite so clearly spelt out in the booklet.) Boulanger characterises her recital through contrasted affects: the recitative-style slow movement of the sonata by LC Hesse is especially interesting.

CPE appears entirely on his own in a stylish recital devoted to his flute sonatas. Flautist Katalin Horvath's selection takes in different periods of his output, including the splendid *Hamburg Sonata*, which dates from the end of his life. The earlier pieces are noticeably lighter fare, composed to suit the simpler tastes of his flute-playing patron, but are so idiomatic that one is easily charmed. Here too, Eva Maria Pollerus's choice of continuo instruments (which she plays alongside



cellist Thomas Platzgummer) stands out for its variety and acoustic fascination: as well as the usual harpsichord we hear a clavichord and a square piano, whose contrasted tones bring out different timbres in the flute. This is one reason to investigate this new recording, even if you already own Barthold Kuijken's fine two-disc anthology, which alternates between the more usual choices of harpsichord and fortepiano for the continuo (and no cello).

We finish at the century's end with the Swiss ensemble Der Musikalische Garten, whose recital **Zu Gast im blauen Haus** includes music by several pre-classical luminaries (not least JC Bach and the Stamitzes, father and son). As ensemble playing goes, this rivals the Weichlein recording with which I began. There's plenty of vigour and fire, which is just as well, because the music varies noticeably in quality: JC Bach's *Sonata notturna* is lively and spirited but the finale of Anton Fils's Trio is one of the most spectacularly empty-headed things I've heard in a while. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Weichlein Encaenia musices, Op 1
Ens Masques / Olivier Fortin
Alpha ALPHA212



Various Cprsrs Bound to Nothing Fantasticus
Resonus RES10156



Various Cprsrs Treasures of the German Baroque Radio Antiqua
Ambronay AMY305



CPE Bach. Graun. Hesse Trio Sonatas
Lucile Boulanger, Arnaud de Pasquale
Alpha ALPHA202



CPE Bach Flute Sonatas
Horvath, Pollerus, Platzgummer
TYXArt TXA15056



Various Cprsrs Zu Gast im blauen Haus
Der Musikalische Garten
ARS Produktion ARS38185

though, is a fierce attachment to Armenian folk, a plangent, labyrinthine language that comes to the fore in Khachaturian's *Poem-song*. It's a language that certainly galvanises these musicians, who relish the piece's haunting twists and turns. **Hannah Nepil**

'The Soul of Lady Harmsworth'

Ernst The Last Rose of Summer (Etude No 6).
Gran Caprice, Op 26 **Paganini** Moto perpetuo,
Op 11. Cantabile, Op 17. Mose-Fantasia **Sarasate**
Romanza andaluza, Op 22. Malagueña, Op 21.
Zapateado, Op 23 **Tchaikovsky** Souvenir d'un
lieu cher, Op 42 **Wieniawski** Légende, Op 17.
Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op 16

Kristóf Baráti vn **Gábor Farkas** pf
Hungaroton HCD32760 (70' • DDD)



What a good title for this selection of famous 19th-century encores. The 'Lady Harmsworth' in question is a 1703 masterpiece by Antonio Stradivari, though for Hungaroton to imply that it belongs to Kristóf Baráti is misleading: he has it on loan from the Stradivarius Society of Chicago. It is as beautiful an instrument to look at as it is to hear, producing in the words of one connoisseur 'a cheerful, forthcoming tone as rich as its varnish colour suggests'.

And for those who like to hear the violin played at its sweet and acrobatic best, then Baráti is out of the top drawer. Born in Budapest in 1979, he puts one in mind of Vengerov, with the same intensity of sound, unbridled athleticism and, when needed, searing leaps into the stratosphere that send a tingle down the spine. Pianist Gábor Farkas, too, is no wallflower – listen to the precision and crisp rhythm he provides in the three Sarasate pieces – and, beneficially, he has been given equal billing in the sound picture. The four violinist-composers on the disc, not to mention Tchaikovsky, wrote keyboard parts that are meant to be heard. Too often they are relegated to the background or separated from the violin. Listen to Ruggiero Ricci in some of the same repertoire from the 1950s (Decca), fizzing with exuberance and technical wizardry but with poor Louis Persinger and Ernest Lush reduced to mere ciphers. Baráti and Farkas operate side by side and to far greater effect, even when the tempi of pieces such as *Zapateado* and *Moto perpetuo* are slightly more measured than Ricci's.

With a rare chance to hear Ernst's take for solo violin on Schubert's 'Der Erlkönig' and all three movements (for once) of the Tchaikovsky suite, this disc comes very warmly recommended. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Josef Hofmann

Jeremy Nicholas celebrates the art and artistry of the Polish-born American pianist who inspired a generation of musicians during a career that spanned more than half a century

There are three pianists I've met over the years who heard Josef Hofmann in his prime. Earl Wild acknowledged Hofmann's style as the biggest influence on him gaining a fluid and flexible technique: 'His interpretations were always delivered with great logic and beauty.' Jorge Bolet admitted to me that whenever he heard either Rachmaninov or Hofmann, he always thought to himself, 'Every note that they play – that is what I would like to play.' Shura Cherkassky, Hofmann's best-known pupil, told me that no recording Hofmann made came anywhere near to capturing his unique sound.

My introduction to his playing was when a friend gave me his copy of a Columbia Masterworks LP (ML4929) – the live recording of Hofmann's Golden Jubilee concert at the Metropolitan Opera House on November 28, 1937. Despite the less than pristine sound (since reissued by Ward Marston, much improved and with extra items), I can't describe the thrill of hearing for the first time this legendary, almost mystical, figure of whom I had only read about in books. Here was one of the greatest pianists in history, captured on the wing. Everything seemed so lucid, easy and natural, leading voices singing beautifully but with many subtly highlighted inner voices I had not noticed before; the skittering, unpedalled *fioratura*, the sudden electrical charges, and the imitable way he would grab your attention with a phrase and then *decrescendo*.

Not everything came off perfectly that night. (A young pianist once mentioned to Godowsky the wrong notes he had heard at a Hofmann recital, to which Godowsky, Hofmann's lifelong friend, merely commented: 'Why

I can't describe the thrill of hearing for the first time this legendary figure of whom I had only read about in books

look for spots on the sun?') There are moments of incoherence and excess. Hofmann could be madly (and maddeningly) impulsive, a trait he inherited from his teacher Anton Rubinstein, and it is his now unfashionable brand of pianism – where the concept of a work is a fusion of the composer's and artist's thoughts – that offends many critics and pianists today.

Born in Poland in 1876, Hofmann was the epitome of the exploited child prodigy. When he was 11, he gave 50 recitals in America in the space of three months; the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children protested and, at a time when a respectable annual salary was \$500, a philanthropist named Alfred Corning Clark stepped in and offered Hofmann's father \$50,000 to take the child away from the stage and not return until he was 18. 'The problem with being a wunderkind,' Hofmann was fond of saying, 'is that the "wunder" disappears at the same time as the "kind".'

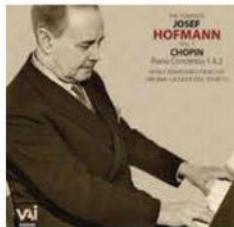
Hofmann, a diminutive figure with small hands, made the transition. A giant among his peers, he maintained his position as one of the highest paid instrumentalists in the world for the next 54 years, though from 1939 onwards due to family problems and alcohol his playing deteriorated. He gave his final recital in 1948 and retired to Los Angeles where he lived the remaining nine years of his life in relative obscurity, devoting his time to developing such items as car windscreen wipers, pneumatic springs and piano amplification. At his death he held more than 70 patents.

In 1970, when I was given the 'Jubilee LP', no other Hofmann recordings were available other than this recital (and it had taken many years for Columbia to

DEFINING MOMENTS

- 1881 – *The young virtuoso arrives*
Debut aged five at the Warsaw Opera House
- 1892–94 – *Two great teachers leave their mark*
Studies with Moritz Moszkowski (briefly) and Anton Rubinstein (some 40 lessons over the space of two years) before making mature debut in Hamburg under Rubinstein's baton
- November 1912–February 1913 – *The Russian tour*
Gives a series of 21 recitals in St Petersburg of 255 works, all played from memory
- 1918 – *The Pole becomes an American*
Moves from Berlin to live in the United States
- 1927–38 – *The pianist heads a major conservatoire*
Director of Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, having been its first Head of Piano since 1924
- 1946 – *Bowing out in New York*
The last of Hofmann's 151 Carnegie Hall recitals

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Chopin Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2
Josef Hofmann pf
Philharmonic Society of New York /
John Barbirolli
(recorded live, Carnegie Hall 1938 & 1936)
VIAA (2/92^R)



persuade the pianist to give permission to issue it). Now nearly all of them are on CD. Hofmann was the first famous pianist ever to make a recording: in 1886 Edison invited the 10-year old prodigy to his studio where he made a few cylinders (these seem to have disappeared, but three more cylinders from 1896 are shortly to be issued by Marston). He made his first commercial recording in 1903, his last in 1923 (some further sides for RCA in HMV in 1935 were never issued in his lifetime). Like Busoni and Godowsky, he seems not to have enjoyed the business of recording, though these studio discs include many performances of fabulous artistry.

Among the greatest Hofmann treasures are a complete recital given at the Curtis Institute (he was Director there) a few days after the Jubilee Concert, and live broadcasts from the late 1930s of the two Chopin concertos. There are moments in these which regularly move me to tears – and if I had to take just one piano recording to my desert island it would be Hofmann playing the *Romanza* from the E minor Concerto. Perhaps it's some unfathomable connection, some personal identification with the way in which the music is played, but it is a rare artist who can have that effect on a listener. **G**

Instrumental



Geoffrey Norris reviews two contrasting Scriabin recitals:

'In the preludes she feels the pulse instinctively, knowing when its shape suggests a slight pulling back or pushing forward' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



Jeremy Nicholas listens to works arranged for an unusual piano:

*'The clincher is a performance of *A Night on the Bare Mountain* in which he is partnered by Argerich'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas - No 21, 'Waldstein', Op 53;

No 29, 'Hammerklavier', Op 106

Sunwook Kim pf

Accentus (ACC303551 (66' • DDD)



Korean-born Sunwook Kim came to prominence in 2006 at the age of 18, when he won the Leeds International Competition. From the concerto finals, which I attended, he was a clear and deserved victor, and a recital I caught a few years later at Manchester University showed that he had the soul and the poetry, as well as the fingers and the temperament, for the big Schubert A major Sonata. Now this first solo CD confirms that he is a force to be reckoned with.

He has chosen two of Beethoven's big pyrotechnic showpieces; or at least this is the aspect his playing highlights. Textures are phenomenally clear throughout – the octave *glissandos* in the finale of the *Waldstein*, for instance, are dispatched with consummate ease – and if anything in the *Hammerklavier* made Kim sweat, you wouldn't know it. I intend no backhandedness with such compliments. On the contrary – hats off.

Scrupulous observation of Beethoven's dynamics is another conspicuous feature – though perhaps a little too conspicuous, since it tends to reinforce what's on the page without always revealing the impulse that lies behind it. Add to that Kim's rather merciless *fortissimo* and you have small but sure signs of a not yet fully mature artist. Much of his *forte* playing you would think was marked *fortissimo*, while his *fortissimo* and *sforzando* have a tendency to explode like cannon-fire. Either side of the recapitulation in the *Waldstein*'s first movement (from around 6'10" to 6'30") the high Fs – the top note on Beethoven's instrument at the time – are noticeably out of tune, and this, too,

Kim seems determined we should register. Then, after a nicely evocative opening, with Beethoven's pedal markings scrupulously observed, the main theme of the finale is well and truly nailed to the floor, as if in the unlikely event that we might somehow miss its revelation. At one level the *Waldstein* Sonata is a fine example of how much Beethoven's piano exercises influenced the textures and even the substance of his compositions. But I'm not sure I want a pianist to highlight this fact. A contra-bass D flat at 4'40" and a corresponding C for the final triadic celebration – neither of them available to Beethoven at the time, though they would be 12 years later for the *Hammerklavier* – add a touch of egregious Lisztian attention-grabbing.

The outer movements of the *Hammerklavier* are mightily impressive by any standard, and if the slow movement feels unusually swift at quaver=80-84, that is still a couple of notches below Beethoven's own marking. Nor could it really be said that Kim is insensitive to its extraordinary harmonic shifts. The problem is his uncertainty when the arena is spiritual rather than physical, with the result that there is no sense of floating or mystery, and at the climax he once again pushes the tone past the legitimately clamorous to the blatantly clangorous. It's as though the music is somehow being strangled, rather allowed to radiate its glory.

The glassy piano tone is clearly not something Kim alone should take the blame for, and the same obviously goes for the tuning. Accentus's booklet essay is respectable in content but appears to have been typeset by someone who doesn't know what a paragraph break is supposed to look like. **David Fanning**

Cage • Cowell

'Amiable Conversation'

Cage Tossed as it is Untroubled. Soliloquy.

Dream. In the Name of the Holocaust. Two

Pieces. The Perilous Night. Primitive Cowell

Sinister Resonance. Aeolian Harp. Three Irish

Legends. The Banshee. Vestiges. Amiable Conversation. The Snow of Fuji-Yama

Sabine Liebner pf

Wergo (WER7326-2 (78' • DDD)



This is a thoroughly imaginative pairing of John Cage and Henry Cowell, especially coming after Cowell's impressive showing as *Composer of the Week* on BBC Radio 3 last October, drawing on Joel Sachs's biography. Both composers were pioneers but Cowell's versatility and stylistic diversity have confused people. He was in his teens when he supported a MacDowell type of harmonised melody with low tone-clusters in his *Irish Legends*; he got inside the piano for *The Banshee*, sweeping prettily across the strings; in his European tours starting during the 1920s he became so famous for his aggressive tone-cluster pieces that Bartók asked his permission to use them; and he was a writer, publisher, propagandist for new music and theoretician. After the Second World War he visited Iran, India and Japan and incorporated aspects of their musics into some of the most impressive multicultural works of the kind now fashionable.

Liebner alternates her two composers attractively. The 1940s were the heyday of Cage's prepared piano and the pieces here, often for Merce Cunningham's dances, are as fascinating as any – just gorgeous sounds, played with clear rhythmic drive too. *Dream*, in the Phrygian mode, is one of Cage's best tunes. I'm not joking – look at the last movement of the String Quartet or *In a Landscape*, from the same period.

The booklet-note is a lengthy generalised essay, not always sufficiently informative about each work. (Cowell was unjustly imprisoned for four years, not 15.) Liebner is a persuasive performer, creating an anthology which is ideal for introducing either composer and containing surprises for those who know the work of both.

Peter Dickinson



A force to be reckoned with: Leeds International Piano Competition winner Sunwook Kim has recorded Beethoven sonatas for Accentus

Cage

'Cage After Cage'

Two Composed Improvisations. Variations I.

Child of Tree. Inlets. 27'10.554"

Matthias Kaul *perc*

Wergo  WER7320-2 (75' • DDD)



Percussionist Matthias Kaul comes at Cage from a background in rock and jazz

drumming, and it shows in his sense of freedom, his agency and in the range of sounds – more visceral than many interpreters dare. Cage often leaves instrumentation up to the performer and Kaul tends towards the gentle, mellow, quirky and mysterious. He keeps his touch light and his timbres tactile. He has a knack for making percussion instruments sound like human voices, which can be uncanny, or like natural elements, which can be evocative and pictorial. In the booklet-notes he admits to stretching Cageian 'legality', but I like it.

This disc includes two versions of *Composed Improvisation*. The first, for solo

snare drum, works as an opener, clearing the ears with poised interplay of silence and delicate textures, while the second, for one-sided drums, makes a pivot point that deepens, broadens and darkens the palette. The placement of their different characters hints at Kaul's feel for pacing – in other words, he conceived this collection as an album that rewards being listening to in a single sitting.

Variations I is a work from 1958 in classical theme-and-variation form. The 'theme' consists of six pieces of paper marked with dots and lines, and to create the variations the player shuffles those pages around and plays the results. In Kaul's hands it becomes 15 minutes of lively, intricate dialogue on African mbira and Caribbean steel drums. *Inlets* is a cheerful, gurgling rhapsody of conch shells filled with water. *Child of Tree* is a symphony for cactus, poinciana seed-rattle, apple, leaves and wooden sticks – instruments with which Kaul conjures the sound of wind, fire and snoring. It's so vivid that it's almost narrative.

The biggest and most clearly instructed piece is 27'10.554" (yep, guess the duration), whose score is divvied up into instrumental

groups of wood, metal, skin and 'other'. A radio counts as one of those 'others', which allows for fun fragments of pop songs to filter into the mix. Kaul's stop-start performance is eclectic, inventive and astute, and crucially leaves room for the daftness of kazoo and glitches as well as the reverence of gongs and, of course, silence. **Kate Molleson**

Chopin

Preludes, Op 28. Barcarolle, Op 60.

Berceuse, Op 57. Polonaise No 5, Op 44

Nelson Goerner *pft*

Alpha  ALPHA224 (59' • DDD)



This year the pianist Nelson Goerner has been more active than usual on behalf of Chopin. In October he served as a juror for the 17th International Chopin Competition in Warsaw. Mid-August found him at the Penderecki Centre in Luslawice, Poland, where he recorded this splendid recital built around the Preludes, Op 28. It is a disc that can only solidify Goerner's reputation as one of the outstanding



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Barchard
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Ives	3 Places in New England etc. (SACD)	A. Davis £11.00
Mayr	Saffo (2CD)	Brown, Schäfer, Hauk £10.00
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Schumann	Works for Piano & Orchestra	Jan Lisiecki £11.25
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An incendiary performance: Matthias Kaul records a disc of music by Cage for Wergo (review on page 61)

Chopin exponents of his generation.

One of the most striking aspects of Goerner's Chopin is his ease of execution. Nothing ever sounds forced or overblown. His extensive experience with 19th-century instruments may certainly be a factor. And it could be that Goerner is ever mindful of contemporary accounts of Chopin's own playing, with its infinite spectrum of nuance within a rather restricted dynamic range. Whatever the case, in certain heroic or agitated pieces, Goerner's ability to clarify textures, revealing as he does so a wealth of seldom-heard detail, is virtually without parallel.

The normally swashbuckling Op 44 Polonaise, with its brooding hauteur and cascading octaves, is an excellent case in point. Explosive force is replaced by soaring lyricism, supported by an elegantly proud rhythmic underpinning unmistakable as anything but Polish. The repetitive rhythmic flourishes that prepare the *Tempo di mazurka* are a model of suggestive restraint.

If there is a downside to Goerner's self-effacing musicianship, it might be that, in pieces like the Berceuse or the passionate D minor Prelude, understated refinement can work against a compellingly vivid representation. In the Preludes there are

many standouts, among them the A minor, G sharp minor and G minor pieces.

Listening to the entire set, however, I miss the variety of progression from microcosm to microcosm, each its own unique expressive realm, that makes Dong Hyek Lim's recent Preludes so compelling.

That said, as Goerner nears the full blossom of his maturity, his interpretations are never less than original, deeply considered and filled with characteristic detail. That they also exhibit rare qualities of wisdom and discernment make him someone to return to, again and again.

Patrick Rucker

Preludes – selected comparison:

Lim (11/15) (WARN) 2564 60688-8

Goerner discusses the Chopin Preludes on page 46

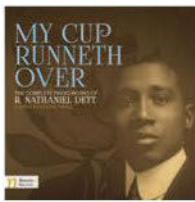
Dett

'My Cup Runneth Over'

Complete Piano Works

Clipper Erickson pf

Navona M ② NV6013 (148' • DDD)



The piano works of Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943) span his entire creative life,

from early ragtime influences to the complexity and substance of his final works for the instrument. Given his importance as one of the first composers of African descent to achieve a sophisticated and serious fusion of Negro folk music and spirituals with European art-music traditions, not to mention his skills as a concert pianist, it's surprising that no one until Clipper Erickson has essayed Dett's complete piano output on disc.

However, the wait was worth it, for this music is simply wonderful, while Erickson's idiomatic, colourful, technically adroit and caring interpretations do the repertoire full justice. While one easily perceives Dett's stylistic influences, the music's consistent creativity always holds interest, even in such early pieces as the *Magnolia Suite* (1912); it's hard not to get pulled into *The Deserted Cabin*'s brooding atmosphere and dark bass-register chords or the quirky virtuoso outbursts that keep you guessing in *The Place Where the Rainbow Ends*. No less a figure than Percy Grainger championed *In the Bottoms* (1913), from which he recorded the sprightly yet demanding Juba Dance that Erickson so dashingly tosses off.

With the two four-movement suites *Enchantment* (1922) and *Cinnamon Grove*

GRAMOPHONE Collector

A LITTLE LISZT

Jeremy Nicholas sifts through a clutch of recent releases exploring familiar and unfamiliar works by the great Hungarian



Olivia Sham recording 'The Art of Remembering', her new Liszt album on Avie

'The Art of Remembering' is the intriguing title of **Olivia Sham's** multi-layered concept: a sequence of late works she imagines being played by the ageing Abbé as he looks back over his long career, interspersed with assorted earlier pieces. One track often segues into the next, giving the impression of Liszt spontaneously dipping into his back catalogue. Sham plays the late works on a modern Steinway (recorded, I note with admiration, in a single day at Potton Hall), while the earlier fare is divided between an 1845 Erard from the Cobbe Collections and an 1840 Erard at the Royal Academy of Music, Sham's alma mater and current employer of her keen-eared producer Daniel-Ben Pienaar (no mean pianist himself). The disc should do well for her with its unusual selection of repertoire, which illuminates many of the sides of Liszt's complex character. Did I mention that Sham is a terrific pianist? She can play the showman, visionary, romancer and charismatic charmer with equal aplomb.

Roger Muraro's umbrella title for his Liszt recital is 'The Piano of Tomorrow'. 'Liszt's creation is the child of Proteus,' according to the booklet writer. 'Does it also, like the keeper of Poseidon's flocks of sea-beasts, have the gift of prophecy?' Leaving that hanging in the air, this mixed bag of performances is good as far as it goes – which is not as far as some of the best Liszt players. Take the strange handling of

the famous *glissando*s towards the end of the *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 10, which Muraro attempts to accommodate within the melody played *a tempo*. Arthur Rubinstein's exuberant playfulness in this passage leads to a *friska* and coda that leaves Muraro flat-footed by comparison. Best known for his complete recordings of Messiaen and Ravel, the Venetian-born pianist brings conviction and a powerful technique to 'St François de Paule marchant sur les flots' and the great B minor Sonata but is an also-ran besides the likes of Tamás Vásáry and Alfred Brendel in 'St François', and too many to mention in the Sonata.

A third Liszt collection – this one on three CDs – contains exactly what it says on the tin: 'On Wings of Song', some 21 vocal and operatic transcriptions. Disc 1 is devoted to 'Piano works inspired by Rossini' and has such rarities as the *Impromptu brillante sur des thèmes de Rossini et Spontini* and the dazzling *Sept Variations brillantes sur un thème de Rossini*, written when Liszt was just 13 years old. Following these are all 12 of the later *Soirées musicales de Rossini*. Between the jigs and the reels, Liszt finds plenty to keep the fingers busy. The pianist here is the Swiss pianist **Praxedis Geneviève Hug** (b1984) whose exotic moniker and penchant for oversize earrings led me, I confess, to fear the worst. In fact, Hug is a phenomenally gifted Liszt player who, like Sham, can whip up a storm with scintillating brilliance or beguile you with her elegance and sensitivity, much in evidence on the

second disc: 'Song Transcriptions' of works by such obscurities as Festetics, Krov, Dessauer and Lessmann, as well as Schumann and Liszt himself.

That said, Hug's tone can sometimes veer towards the hard-edged. For example, on disc 3, an all-Wagner selection, the *Spinnerlied* is hardly spun in the same way as, say, the nimble-fingered Eileen Joyce, but then it serves her well in the grandiloquent *Rienzi* Fantasy that brings things to an appropriately heroic conclusion. Altogether, this release is highly impressive in its concept, production, recording and playing.

Finally another fine Lisztian but of a different vintage. The American virtuoso **Jerome Rose** recorded a series of Liszt recitals in the mid-1970s and 1986, one of them winning the Grand Prix du Liszt. To celebrate the 40th anniversary of their first appearance, on three Medici Classics discs, and with the repertoire ordered like a helpful reference library, are six *Paganini* Etudes, five Concert Etudes, four Waltzes, two Ballades, two Polonaises, Berceuse, three *Liebesträume*, four *Mephisto Waltzes*, 'Bénédiction de Dieu', two *Légendes* and six *Consolations*. Rose takes no prisoners in what is largely a sequence of bravura works (there are remarkable performances of *Mephisto Waltz* No 1 and 'St François de Paule', for instance) but he also paces and phrases beautifully ('Bénédiction de Dieu'). It is particularly good to have the complete *Liebesträume* and *Consolations* in sequence and in the best-recorded versions I have heard. You may turn elsewhere for more variety of touch (Gary Graffman in the *Paganini* Etudes) and sheer electrifying execution in 'Walderauschen' and 'Gnomenreigen', but as a neatly packaged collection of original works you could hardly wish for a better introduction to Liszt's genius...except, astonishingly, it comes with no booklet. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Liszt 'The Art of Remembering'

Olivia Sham

Avie Ⓜ AV235



Liszt 'The Piano of Tomorrow'

Roger Muraro

La Dolce Volta Ⓜ LDV20



Liszt 'On Wings of Song'

Praxedis Geneviève Hug

RCA Ⓜ ③ 88875 06997-2



Liszt Pf Wks

Medici Classics Ⓜ ③ M40022



Martha Argerich joins Jura Margulis as special guest on a disc showcasing his 'Piano con sordino' (review on page 71)

(1928), Dett's harmonic and textural palette considerably expands, while *Tropic Winter* (1938) conveys both charm and contrapuntal refinement. However, Dett's valedictory *Eight Bible Vignettes* digs deepest of all. The seventh piece, 'Other Sheep', is a nearly-10-minute masterpiece packed with intensely lyrical polyphony, jagged declamatory unison statements, percussive passages and the kind of gravitas one finds in Brahms's late piano pieces.

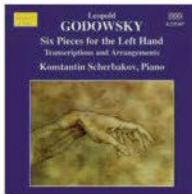
This historically and musically important release not only fills a crucial catalogue gap but sets reference standards. No serious aficionado of the history of American piano music can afford to miss it. **Jed Distler**

Godowsky

'Piano Music, Vol 13 –

Transcriptions and Arrangements'

Albéniz Tango. **Triana** **Bishop** Home, Sweet Home **Bizet** Adagietto **Chopin** Arrangement du concert du Rondo, Op 16 **Godard** Canzonetta **Godowsky** Six Pieces for the Left Hand Alone. Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes by Johann Strauss II - No 2, Die Fledermaus **Saint-Saëns** Le cygne **JS Smith** The Star-Spangled Banner **O** **Straus** The Last Waltz **Weber** Momento capriccioso (all arr/transcr Godowsky) **Konstantin Scherbakov** pf Marco Polo ® 8 225367 (64' • DDD)



Scherbakov began the unprecedented task of recording Godowsky's complete works nearly two decades ago. The end is in sight – and this volume is unquestionably among the finest of the series in content, performance and sound.

One of Godowsky's nicknames was 'The Apostle of the Left Hand'. You can hear why in the *Six Pieces for the Left Hand Alone* (mainly from 1929). Listening blind, would you know the music was being played by one hand? I doubt it. And, if you did, would you believe it? To my mind they are far more effective in this form than in Godowsky's subsequent versions for two hands heard on Vol 11 (A/13).

The rest of the disc is given over to transcriptions of various kinds. These include the early and very seldom-heard arrangements of Weber's *Momento capriccioso* and Chopin's Rondo, Op 16, which now seem rather pointless exercises, adding nothing of interest to the originals and losing their essential characters in the process.

Godowsky's contrapuntal genius is put to better use with the ingenious interweaving of themes from *Die Fledermaus* and in this, one of his most frequently played works,

Scherbakov is up there with the best (Hamelin, Freire, Moiseiwitsch) and, moreover, plays it with all the repeats. In Godowsky's perfumed take on Saint-Saëns's 'The Swan' from *Carnival of the Animals*, Scherbakov has to compete with Cherkassky for charm and pianistic finesse: he comes up smelling of roses.

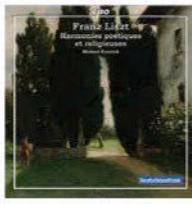
How elegantly and with what sincerity and empathy for the idiom he plays the other (minor) transcriptions. These include a proper rarity (not alluded to in the booklet) in the form of an unpublished arrangement of *The Last Waltz* by Oscar Straus (1870–1954) notated by Gilles Hamelin, pianophile father of Marc-André, from a piano roll made by Godowsky. All in all, if you haven't sampled Godowsky before, this is as good a place as anywhere to start. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Liszt

Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, S173

Michael Korstick pf

CPO ® ② CPO777 951-2 (85' • DDD)



At least until Liszt's bicentenary, complete recordings of his *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* were something of a rarity. Even stalwart Lisztians such as Richter and

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Vladimir Horowitz's 'Return to Chicago' is released on DG (review on page 71)

Brendel contented themselves with excerpts. But since 2011 there have been several fine accounts, including those of Steven Osborne, François-Frédéric Guy and the late, sorely missed Brigitte Engerer. Now there is another, by the Cologne-born pianist currently based in Linz, Michael Korstick.

In Liszt's engagement with the poetry of Alphonse de Lamartine, there is a naked intensity, an urgent, in-your-face, lapel-grasping earnestness that one doesn't find, say, in the *Années de pèlerinage*. Therein lie the challenges of this 10-piece cycle lasting close to an hour and a half. Reticence and half measures will scuttle the entire enterprise, and few pianists are willing to lay it all out so boldly. Fortunately Korstick isn't one of them.

From the outset, the high-flown rhetoric and dense textures of 'Invocation' are delivered with grace and conviction. The less elaborate pieces, the 'Ave Maria', 'Pater noster' and 'Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil', all derived from Liszt's own choral settings, are models of simplicity and directness. The two highly personal pieces that conclude the cycle, 'Andante lagrimoso' and 'Cantique d'amour', for all their wealth of detail, are strikingly sincere.

But it is in the *grandes machines*, the three big extended works that form the backbone of the *Harmonies*, that Korstick is at his most impressive. 'Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude' is spacious, questing yet disarmingly intimate. 'Pensée des morts', the earliest of the set and, in many ways, the most harmonically and rhythmically daring, emerges with the naturalness of speech. The most familiar and abused of the set, 'Funérailles', Liszt's monument to the so-called Martyrs of Arad executed at the end of the Hungarian Revolution, profits most from being heard in context. In this mighty funeral march, Korstick evokes the great spectacles of public mourning that we know from 19th-century photographs and written accounts. After that, the rolling, organ-like textures of the 'Miserere d'après Palestrina' come as the inevitable and only possible answer.

For the unique admixture of mysticism, exultation, contemplation and protest that is the *Harmonies*, if Engerer remains my first choice, Korstick emerges a close and solid second.

Patrick Rucker

Selected comparison:
Engerer (MIRA) MIR084

Mendelssohn

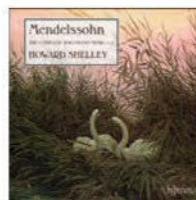
'The Complete Solo Piano Music, Vol 4'

Andante cantabile e Presto agitato, WoO6. Lied in A. Sechs Lieder ohne Worte, Book 5, Op 62.

Six Preludes and Fugues, Op 35

Howard Shelley pf

Hyperion ® CDA68125 (67' • DDD)



As Howard Shelley reaches the fourth instalment of his solo Mendelssohn journey, familiar and unfamiliar once again rub shoulders. He brings out the Bachian elements in the Op 35 Preludes and Fugues – notably the twisting subject of the First Fugue or the agitated Third Fugue – with total naturalness, while the *Prestissimo staccato* of the Third Prelude is exactly that. The Fugue of the Fifth dances with due clarity, contrasting very effectively with the song-without-words Sixth Prelude.

You'd be forgiven for doing a double-take at the start of the *Andante cantabile e Presto agitato*, which is a first cousin to the familiar *Andante and Rondo capriccioso*. Shelley makes a strong case for it, finding

particular poignancy in the recollection of the theme's first three notes as a dying echo at the close, while the *Presto* is supple and airborne. After that, an A major *Lied*, a lilting and highly personal piece penned while the composer was on honeymoon.

We're back on more familiar territory in the Fifth Book of *Songs Without Words*. In the first Song, Shelley finds a middle ground between the recent Kirschnereit and the faster-flowing Barenboim. To my mind the second is a tad slow in Shelley's hands – at least compared to the high jinks of Barenboim and the airily wondrous Perahia – though the E minor number that follows is particularly absorbing. The popular 'Gondolier Song' of the fifth poses the question: how *con moto* do you want your *Andante* to be? Shelley and Perianes tend towards the dreamy – here Kirschnereit's faster tempo seems more apt. And in the famous 'Spring Song' that closes the set, Shelley is finely detailed yet others find an even greater sense of carefree rapture. All in all, though, a fascinating recital, warmly recorded and with absorbing notes from Mendelssohn scholar R Larry Todd. **Harriet Smith**

Songs Without Words, Op 62 – selected comparisons:
Barenboim (12/74th, 8/80th) (DG) 453 061-2GTA2

Kirschnereit (11/15) (BERL) 0300639BC

Op 62 No 2 – selected comparison:

Perahia (3/00) (SONY) SK66511

Op 62 No 5 – selected comparison:

Perianes (12/14) (HARM) HMC90 2195

Mozart

Keyboard Music, Vols 8 & 9*

Piano Sonatas – No 1, K279; No 2, K280; No 16, K545; No 18, K576. Variations – K179; K352; K573. Suite, K399. Allegros – K312; K400. Gigue, K574. Kleiner Trauermarsch, K453a. Menuetto, K355. Modulating Prelude, Kdeest (K624/626a). Four Preludes, K284a

Kristian Bezuidenhout fp

Harmonia Mundi ② HMU90 7532/3 (154' • DDD)



Kristian Bezuidenhout may not have chosen to shock but could well do so in the first movement of the 'little sonata for beginners', K545, which opens this two-disc set. What's happened to the flowing, emollient melody we usually hear? Bezuidenhout shows that Mozart didn't intend it to sound that way because the notes aren't phrased in one arching span. In fact most of the other notes aren't phrased at all; nor is there a single dynamic marking. So he chooses his own modes of articulation. Add the fast transients of the

Paul McNulty copy of an Anton Walter fortepiano – tuned differently to a pianoforte – and the whole movement may be a prickly listening experience, especially in the powerfully wrought development.

Contrast comes in the following *Andante*. The sound, mostly muted by the moderator, enhances atmospheres of affecting lyricism. Melodic curves are graciously shaped, repeats decorated. Bezuidenhout also amends some passages in the accepted text of 1805 (the autograph is lost) and does so in the finale as well. But neither debases a distinguished performance.

His feelings about this work are clear. It is also clear that other pieces – like two of the sets of variations – are of little appeal. He shows intermittent interest in K352 but treats K179 and K573 with some indifference. Nor does he appear to have a high opinion of the Sonata K279 – the outer movements forthright, even relentless, the *Andante* stark and of minimal tonal variety. The softening effect of the moderator is sorely missed here, though he uses it to emphasise key-changes in the *Adagio* of K280. Garnering more attention are the isolated pieces K284a, K312, K400, K574 and K624/626a, the most substantial of this group being K399, a Suite comprising an Overture and three Baroque dances. It finds Bezuidenhout in his element, and also heralds an elevated performance of K576.

Find yourself pulled in to an interpretation born of searching musical intelligence. Bezuidenhout plumbs depths rarely reached, affirming too that any score is a dead letter – unless nuances, inflections and aspects of emotional rhetoric that cannot be notated are discerned, felt and expressed. **Nalen Anthoni**

Mozart

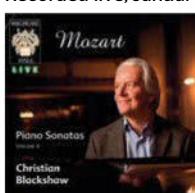
'Piano Sonatas, Vol 4'

Piano Sonatas – No 7, K309; No 11, K331; No 15, K533/494; No 18, K576

Christian Blackshaw pf

Wigmore Hall Live ② WHLIVE0078 (93' • DDD)

Recorded live, January 5, 2013



Hoist with my own petard, I think. Reviewing Igor Levit's Bach/Beethoven/Rzewski Variations (11/15), I rashly concluded that I would be lucky to hear as fine a piano recording this year (meaning Gramophone Award year, rather than calendar year, incidentally). And, lo and behold, here is one.

Christian Blackshaw's Mozart is a known quantity, of course, and I doubt whether any of the superlatives below hasn't been applied to the previous three volumes in his Wigmore Hall Live series. But permit me to join the chorus of acclaim for his elegance of phrasing, limpid tone quality (captured in a demonstration-quality recording), tastefulness of nuance and ornamentation, and imaginative response to harmony and character. Every tiniest detail here is thought through, and only the most painstaking forensics would find the slightest fault in the fingerwork (a very few bass notes don't quite speak, and even more rarely an ornament is less than silky smooth, if you want to know). Yet nothing is fetishised. Perfection – or something very close to it – is in the service of freedom.

As Blackshaw himself notes, 'the sonatas resemble mini-operas'. But how to apply that insight with discretion and variety, with humanity but without histrionics, is a rare gift. Blackshaw is one of the few who know how to make the music sing and dance without making a song and dance of it. And alongside operatic eloquence, his treatment of the surrounding texture suggests the civilised conversation and wit of Mozart's wind serenades.

Never have the 16 minutes of the first movement of the A major Sonata (K331) passed more graciously, for me at least, and the acknowledgement of the *Adagio* marking for the fifth variation is exquisitely tasteful. At the end of the C major Sonata (K309), how delectable is the tiny relaxation of pulse to allow the lowest register to speak. How subtly weighted are the *fp* accents in the slow movement of the F major, and how perfectly adapted to their harmonic environment. Even the wonderful Uchida sounds occasionally a fraction effortful by comparison.

Regrettably, I have to note that this volume completes Blackshaw's survey of the sonatas. I can only hope for a set of the fantasies, rondos and miscellanea so that I can continue this paean. **David Fanning**

Selected comparison:

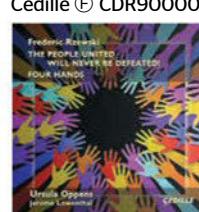
Uchida (PHIL) 468 356-2PBS

Rzewski

The People United Will Never Be Defeated. Four Hands^a

Ursula Oppens, ^aJerome Lowenthal pf

Cedille ⑤ CDR90000 158 (66' • DDD)



Hard on the heels of Igor Levit's blistering new account of Rzewski's variations



Nuanced playing in Scriabin's piano works: Valentina Lisitsa

comes a new recording by its dedicatee and first performer. It was Ursula Oppens's 1978 Vanguard LP that provided me with my first encounter with this piece, and at the time its harnessing of extended techniques, hyper-virtuosity and casual polystylism to a Romantic-radical agenda (similar in so many ways to Ronald Stevenson's *Passacaglia on DSCH*) seemed attractive in principle but off-puttingly trendy in practice. But then later, finer recordings won me over, in large part at least, to the musical imagination at work.

Not surprisingly, Oppens's new version is sonically far more vivid than her first (though not in any way comparable to what Sony Classical provides for Levit). Nor have the years diminished her keyboard agility. Only by the standards of a Hamelin or a Levit do some of the textures emerge as a little blurry or the rhythmic drive as less than breathtaking. This is, in short, a fine monument to Oppens's unflinching devotion to contemporary piano music, and it is also a tribute to her that others have been emboldened to follow and surpass her.

Whether the four pieces that comprise *Four Hands* will figure in the calculations of any but the most ardent Rzewski completist, I would doubt, since they show

that without a strong concept to fire him up, his invention is not all that remarkable.

Cedille reprints Christian Wolff's original essay and one by Jerome Lowenthal – Oppens's long-standing duet and duo partner – on *Four Hands*.

David Fanning

People United – selected comparisons:
Hamelin (7/99) (HYPE) CDA67077
Levit (11/15) (SONY) 88875 06096-2

A Scriabin · J Scriabin · Pasternak

Pasternak Two Preludes **A Scriabin** Piano
Sonatas – No 4, Op 30; No 9, 'Black Mass', Op 68.
Enigme, Op 52 No 2. Nuances, Op 56 No 3. Trois Pièces, Op 45. Poème, Op 32 No 1. Preludes, Op 11 – selection. Quasi valse, Op 47. Vers la flamme, Op 72 **J Scriabin** Four Preludes
Ludmila Berlinskaya pf
Melodiya Ⓜ MELCD100 2398 (57' • DDD)

Scriabin

'Nuances'
Allegro de concert, Op 18. Trois Etudes, Op 65 – No 2, Allegretto; No 3, Molto vivace. Fugues – WoO13; WoO20. Two Impromptus, Op 14. Klavierstück, Anh16. Mazurkas – WoO15; WoO16. Nocturne, Op 9 No 2; WoO3. Patetico, Op 8 No 12. Trois Pièces, Op 2 – No 2, Prélude; No 3, Impromptu à la mazur. Poèmes – Op 41; Op 59

No 1. Scherzos – Op 46; WoO4; WoO5. Waltzes – Op 1; WoO7

Valentina Lisitsa

Decca Ⓜ 478 8435DH (77' • DDD)



At no point do the repertoires of these two discs overlap, but, as if tiptoeing around one another, both of them give some idea of how Scriabin's musical language developed from his earliest years to those strange, febrile, luminescent works of his maturity. The recital by Ludmila Berlinskaya, daughter of the late lamented cellist of the Borodin Quartet, Valentin Berlinsky, extends from 10 of the 24 Preludes, Op 11 (completed in 1896), through to the Ninth (*Black Mass*) Sonata (1912–13) and *Vers la flamme* (1914) by way of the Fourth Sonata (1903). Valentina Lisitsa explores a swathe of juvenilia – waltzes, scherzos and mazurkas all composed even before Scriabin went to study at the Moscow Conservatoire – but also embraces a handful of later pieces. Lisitsa calls her disc 'Nuances' but she



Diego Ares: delightful discoveries from a recently uncovered Soler manuscript

misses a trick. One of the Four Pieces, Op 56, is entitled 'Nuances' but she doesn't include it. Berlinskaya does, though her disc is merely called 'Scriabin'.

Berlinskaya's is by far the more nourishing recital. She is limpid and graceful in the first five of her Op 11 Preludes (Nos 5, 9, 10, 11 and 13), and then launches headlong into the E flat minor Prelude, taken at a *presto* of fiery, explosive energy and momentum. This is the point at which the recital really takes wing. In the remaining preludes she feels the pulse of the music instinctively, knowing when its shape suggests a slight pulling back or pushing forwards. There is an idiomatic fluidity to her playing, which spills over into the Fourth Sonata, though the Ninth, for all its unnerving undercurrents and vehemence, does not deliver quite the same potency of impact and intensity as on the disc by Yevgeny Sudbin (BIS, 12/07), whose survey of Scriabin's piano music has so far been unsurpassed. Berlinskaya also finds room for two preludes by Boris Pasternak and four (written at the age of 10 and 11) by Scriabin's youngest

son, Julian: from the stylistic point of view, both are Scriabin's heirs.

The predominant quality of the Lisitsa disc is charm. She plays the early pieces, most of which sound nothing like mature Scriabin, with attractive delicacy and lucidity; but when it comes to the very particular swirls and hazes of the later *Poème*, Op 59 No 1, and the Etudes, Op 65 Nos 2 and 3, her somewhat prettified, rose-tinted vision makes you appreciate all the more the closer affinity with Scriabin that comes through in the playing of both Berlinskaya and Sudbin.

Geoffrey Norris

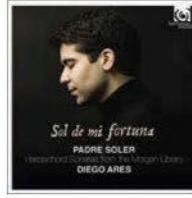
Soler

'Sol de mi fortuna'

Harpsichord Sonatas from the Morgan Library

Diego Ares hpd

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2232 (73' • DDD)



It is easy to think of Antonio Soler as the Scarlatti pupil who perpetuated his

master's sonata style with the keyboard textures manned up a bit and the poetic inspiration watered down. A release such as this one, however, reveals that as a rather harsh assessment. Diego Ares's booklet-notes ooze affection for this amiable keyboardist-priest, and his playing likewise does much to conjure, as he puts it, 'the musical evenings when Brother Antonio, in the intimate surroundings of his cell, improvised on the harpsichord for a handpicked audience'. It makes the disc a pleasing and insightful introduction to Soler's art, which, at once more gentrified than Scarlatti's and more headily Spanish, is certainly worth getting to know.

For those familiar with it already, however, there is an added attraction in that Ares plays sonatas from a manuscript acquired by the Morgan Library in New York in 2011 which contains 43 Soler sonatas, no fewer than 29 of them previously unknown. The manuscript appears to date from the late 1750s, when Soler was still in his twenties and Scarlatti perhaps still alive. It arranges the sonatas in their original same-key pairs, some of them involving known works whose

partner sonatas had been lost thanks to Soler's rather generous habit of lending copies of them out; Ares writes of the experience of reuniting them as 'deeply moving'.

From his thoughtful playing, too, there is no doubting Ares's affinity for Soler. The virtuosity is there, but subtle rhythmic dislocation of lines leaves a prevailing impression of tenderness and wistful lyricism – not even the most clamorous of textures become harsh. His harpsichord – a copy of a lively, Tempranillo-rich Spanish instrument of 1734 – is clearly and atmospherically recorded. How lovely that the world of early music can still turn up delightful discoveries like this!

Lindsay Kemp

'Arrangements & Adaptations'

JS Bach St Matthew Passion - Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder **Liszt** Mephisto Waltz No 1

Mozart Requiem - Confutatis; Lacrymosa

Mussorgsky A Night on the Bare Mountain^a

Nova Melody - Elegy^b **Puccini** Crisantemi

Schumann Dichterliebe - Wenn ich in deine Augen seh **Shostakovich** Symphony No 8 - Toccata; Passacaglia (arr Margulis,

^bBabadjanian)

Jura Margulis, ^aMartha Argerich pfs

Oehms ② OC453 (66' • DDD)

^aRecorded live



Jura Margulis is a name that has not crossed my radar before. Clearly it should have done – and not just because of the booklet's encomium which tells us that '[he] has been internationally recognised for his compellingly communicative performances, as well as for the range of his tonal palette and his consummate virtuosity.'

This disc showcases the talents of the Russian-born, German-trained, American-resident pianist, arranger and piano acoustician. All 10 tracks except the last are played on a piano by Steingraeber & Söhne specially adapted by the company under Margulis's instructions. The idea is to replicate the *sordino* pedal of a fortepiano on a modern grand, which the 'Margulis Sordino Pedal' achieves, we learn, by adding the *sordino* function to the *sostenuto* (middle) pedal by 'push lever, and very thin felt'. That is just one of the CD's USPs. Another – and transcription junkies will love this – is the series of Margulis's own arrangements

and adaptations of works not normally associated with the piano.

The *sordino* pedal comes into its own in 'Wir setzen uns mit Tränen nieder' (the final chorus from Bach's *St Matthew Passion*), two movements from Mozart's Requiem and Puccini's string-quartet movement *Crisantemi*. Then there is the virtuoso Margulis storming through his version of the Liszt-Busoni-Horowitz *Mephisto Waltz* No 1 and his quite extraordinary transcription of the third movement from Shostakovich's Eighth Symphony (here entitled 'Toccata') followed by the sombre fourth movement ('Passacaglia').

The final USP and the disc's clincher is a thrilling live performance of Margulis's arrangement for two pianos of *A Night on the Bare Mountain* in which he is partnered by no less a figure than Martha Argerich. Her handwritten note (in English) praising the advent of the Margulis Sordino Pedal is reproduced on the booklet's first page. I shall have to keep my radar in better order in future.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Return to Chicago'

Chopin Mazurkas - No 7, Op 7 No 3; No 41, Op 63

No 3. Scherzo No 1, Op 20 **Liszt** Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, S161 No 5. Soirée de Vienne, S427 No 6

Moszkowski Etincelles, Op 36 No 6 **Mozart**

Adagio, K540. Rondo, K485. Piano Sonata No 10,

K330 **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas - Kk135;

Kk380 **Schumann** Arabeske, Op 18.

Kinderszenen, Op 15 - Traümerle **Scriabin**

Etudes - Op 2 No 1; Op 8 No 12

Vladimir Horowitz pfs

DG ② 479 4649GH2 (122' • DDD)

Recorded live at Orchestra Hall, Chicago,

October 26, 1986

Includes radio interviews from 1974 & 1986



'My inspiration comes always from the voice. I have more records of old voices than I do of old pianists.' That mantra, from an interview Horowitz gave to Thomas Willis in 1974 (one of two included on this release), coloured everything he did and gave his interpretations a flexibility that meant every recital was a new experience, which is why this one, given when he was 83, is such a fascinating document. It took place in Chicago – where he'd had his first major American success nearly 59 years earlier – and was broadcast locally via the city's main classical radio station WFMT as a thank

you to the city itself, which had always warmly welcomed him.

No one could imitate anything Horowitz did, and that's particularly true of his Scarlatti, which combines lightness of action and the subtlest of pedalling: the sharp angles of Kk380 are preserved without a hint of aggression, while Kk135 is filled with a quiet playfulness, the brilliance almost understated.

Schumann's *Arabeske*, new to his DG output though by no means new to his discography as a whole, has a pearlescent beauty, a reactivity that gives new tints to the main theme each time it reappears. In Liszt's *Petrarch Sonnet No 104*, too, there's an assurance to the way it unfolds that's utterly compelling, its dying moments truly moving, even if it does get a tad tangled in some of the more physically demanding passages. And the Sixth *Soirée de Vienne* is full of rapturous beauties (just sample the murmured filigree beginning at 3'59"). Horowitz's Chopin is not to all tastes, being too romantic for some, but it's hard to resist his Op 7 No 3 Mazurka, which is lent a febrile instability. The First Scherzo, though, is a bit of a car crash that even moments of wondrous singing tone can't rescue. The audience applause is as warm as ever – perhaps out of relief as much as anything else. Ah yes, the audience: late October in the Windy City is perhaps inevitably going to mean a lot of snuffles, sneezes and coughs, and they form an unwelcome counterpoint to the proceedings on stage.

Mozart, Horowitz reveals in a radio interview with Norman Pellegrini recorded the day before his Chicago recital, had been a great love all his life but it was only latterly that he'd felt ready to share it on the concert platform. If others find a more dolorous quality to the B minor Adagio, Horowitz is in his element in the D major Rondo, which glistens and glints with ever-changing hues. And he turns the first movement of the C major Sonata, K330, into a veritable opera in miniature. The Scriabin C sharp minor Etude, Op 2 No 1, is beautifully sung, while the Moszkowski 'Etincelles' – long a favourite encore – has enormous spirit, if not quite the carefree freedom of earlier incarnations, not least the 1975 Carnegie Hall recital (RCA). With good sound and a fascinating booklet essay, this is another compelling addition to the vast Horowitz legacy. Harriet Smith

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Magnus Lindberg

The influential Finnish composer's creative output continues to resist easy categorization, by Andrew Mellor

The soundbite we hear most often in relation to Magnus Lindberg is probably his affirmation that 'only the extreme is interesting'. But it's worth, for once, putting that quote in context. Lindberg was talking about his studies with Vinko Globokar in Paris. More specifically, he was elaborating on some ideas around musical form: that form can, as in late Sibelius, be controlled by process. In terms of extremes, Lindberg was discussing 'the necessity of extreme polarities as the basis for thinking on form'. He went on to say, in the interview published by *Finnish Music Quarterly* in 1997, that 'an original mode of expression can only be achieved through...the hyper-complex combined with the primitive'.

That was then; this is now. But still Lindberg's words can be illuminating, whether you read them in the context of his firebrand music of the 1980s or the ostensibly more delectable works of recent years. The traditional narrative surrounding Lindberg's career is familiar, but if you haven't heard it before, it goes something like this: Finnish composer

Lindberg is, to quote Sir Simon Rattle, 'living proof that the symphony orchestra isn't dead'

hangs out at Darmstadt; Finnish composer moves to Berlin and discovers metal band Einstürzende Neubauten; Finnish composer announces himself as an angry modernist with *Kraft* (1985) for orchestra, electronics and junkyard percussion; Finnish composer mellows; Finnish composer now writes luscious orchestral works that have something to do with Romanticism.

That plotting might be useful to a point. It could also be applied, broadly speaking, to dozens of other composers of Lindberg's generation. And in that sense, it doesn't seem to acknowledge the strong, saturating ideas mentioned by the composer himself in those comments to *FMQ*. It doesn't square with Lindberg's viewing of himself as part of a long compositional tradition with Beethovenian roots. It doesn't show how a piece like *Kraft* can often appear to be doing many of the same things as a piece like *Sculpture* from exactly two decades later. Nor does it explain how Lindberg, who is supposed to have left tub-thumping primitivism behind with *Kraft*, can deliver a pulverizing piece like *Engine* in 1996. The musicologist Kimmo Korhonen has described Lindberg's music as 'goal-oriented' and 'inexorable'. Can we not hear that very idea in *Kraft* as in *Arena* (1995), *Sculpture*,



Magnus Lindberg: 'only the extreme is interesting.' Or is it?

or even in a recent piece like *Era* (2012)? Can we not hear in so many other pieces the 'extreme polarities' Lindberg talked of, the primitive pedal notes that so often underpin his soaring orchestral complexities?

One piece of musical mapping that's both clear and indisputable when charting Lindberg's career is the significance of the orchestra. There have been important works in other media; *Espressione I* for solo cello (1978), in which the composer explored the idea of constant flux, is significant in its demonstration of a strict method that was soon abandoned. But the orchestra in all its forms has been Lindberg's closest musical ally, right from his emergence in the 1990s as the standout talent of Finland's 'Ears Open' movement. Lindberg is, to quote Sir Simon Rattle, 'living proof that the symphony orchestra isn't dead'.

Kraft famously demonstrated Lindberg's desire to invest the symphony orchestra with the sort of energy and decibel levels he'd heard in experimental German rock; a 'smashing together' of both genres to quote the *Guardian's* Tom Service. In a sense, many of the same ideals that were realized in that piece (constant activity, clear momentum, some sense of unease and confrontation embedded deep in the music) remain in Lindberg's works to this day. But from the 1990s onwards, the composer started to believe that that symphony orchestra he'd supercharged with unusual sounds in the 1980s was probably capable of achieving the same ends – and more – on its own.

Thus the composer verbalized his belief that 'you can tilt [the orchestra] in different directions by leaving out

LINDBERG FACTS

Born June 27, 1958, Helsinki
Studied With Paavo Heininen and Einojuhani Rautavaara at the Sibelius Academy and privately with Gérard Grisey and Vinko Globokar in Paris

Professional appointments

Composer-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic (2009-12); Composer-in-residence with the London Philharmonic Orchestra (2014-present)

First significant orchestral work

Donor, written when Lindberg was 16

Lindberg on composing

'Perhaps we shouldn't be so rational as composers; perhaps the most fascinating part of it is the irrational part. Why is your mind, your training, your background, your style, your taste, whatever, why is it such that those things together can quickly judge what you are producing? Go for it - don't be too rational, this is something I've tried to educate myself on recently.'

something or adding something, but there is no need to overhaul it radically'. Korhonen has helpfully linked that process of 'tilting' to a series of orchestral works in which Lindberg does just that: *Sculpture* has no violin part; *Chorale* (2001-2) is scored only for strings and winds. The unusual instrumentation in those pieces might be born of Lindberg's interest in orchestral colour. But in the pieces for full orchestra, chamber orchestra and orchestra acting as *concertante* partner, Lindberg deploys that sense of colour with just as much clarity and verve.

That, too, is tied to Lindberg's comments about function and form, the 'hyper-complex combined with the primitive'. *Arena* (1995) is often described as proof that Lindberg was moving away from the fissile world of *Kraft*. But in *Arena*, the orchestra is still creating its energy from the inside: working like an engine, its inner parts churning away even if there's a gleaming outer casing. This is the nervous energy referred to by Korhonen. It's an energy that might be more guardedly revealed to the listener; that might be veiled or sometimes dormant as in a canvas like *Sebt die Sonne* (2007). But it's also an energy that makes the vast majority of Lindberg's larger orchestral scores so compelling, unpredictable and even terrifying – not least when it roars suddenly to the surface.

The sure sense of direction in Lindberg's music – clear musical dramaturgy, you might call it – comes from the hard-line structural principles he almost always employs. Even if the chosen idea in *Espressione I* proved a technical cul-de-sac, Lindberg has stuck to the principle of employing a

single, all-embracing aesthetic strategy for most of his works. There's often a predetermined harmonic structure pinning his huge sounds down like pegs to some billowing sheets of colour as in *Concerto for Orchestra* (2002-3). The forest of orchestral detail and very clear layers of thematic action can serve to purposefully obscure those structures. But perhaps the way Lindberg's music builds in tension and then explodes with joy or ominous thunder is determined by the careful harmonic journeying underneath. And it's not all that new, either: *Kraft* itself is based on the repeating harmonic patterns of a chaconne.

These days Lindberg increasingly finds himself embedded in orchestras as composer-in-residence: at the New York Philharmonic from 2009 to 2012, and more recently at the London Philharmonic Orchestra. That means new works – *Expo*, with its fascinating combination of contrary slow/fast velocities, was premiered and recorded in New York – but it also means a greater emphasis on *concertante* pieces with which orchestras can engage high-profile soloists. The latest of them was Lindberg's seventh concerto, a second for violin, premiered by Frank Peter Zimmermann with the London Philharmonic on December 9, a month after Christian Tetzlaff played its rhapsodic predecessor (of 2006) with the orchestra.

Lindberg enjoys getting to know new orchestras. He loves to discuss the mysterious alchemy of conducting, in which he's also an experienced practitioner. He talks frankly about giving up on a string quartet commissioned by one of the great ensembles on the circuit, stating that 'the threshold was so high and the ballast of history so heavy that I realised how little I was achieving'. He talks of his desire to write an opera, even if he feels it's a way off. For now, though, it's orchestras that Lindberg seems powerless to resist and which continue to chase him down – the orchestras with which he continues to fine-tune his distinctive, recognisable and fertile style. Conductors and audiences find that style so fascinating and yet so tangible – all the reassuring and unsettling elements we crave from the greatest of orchestral music, rendered in orchestral sounds that are somehow so redolent of the here and now. ©

LINDBERG ON DISC

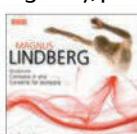
Three of the best recordings of Lindberg's music

**Aura. Engine**

BBC SO, London Sinfonietta / Oliver Knussen

DG (9/00)

Lindberg's four-movement orchestral piece *Aura* is his most overtly symphonic work and one that, arguably, proved his mastery of the orchestra.

**Sculpture. Campana in aria. Concerto for Orchestra**

Esa Tapani /n Finnish RSO / Sakari Oramo

Ondine (2/09)

Lindberg's skilful *concertante* writing, in both an instrumental and structural sense, is revealed with a smile in the horn concerto *Campana in aria*.

**Feria; Corrente II; Arena 2**

Finnish RSO / Jukka-Pekka Saraste

Ondine

Feria launches with a trumpet fanfare of typically Lindbergian shape and mines deep into Lindberg's growing sense of orchestral sonority.

Vocal



David Gutman welcomes a fine new set of Korngold's songs: 'They make a slightly odd couple, this superstar Ariadne/Prima Donna and her Music Master' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



Kate Molleson listens to Julia Wolfe's Anthracite Fields: 'Plenty of the classic post-minimalist, rock-tinged Bang on a Can trademarks are there' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**

M-A Charpentier · Boyvin

'Motets pour une princesse'

Boyvin Grand Prélude. Trio. Cornet ou Tierce. Dialogue de récits et de trios. Duo. Tierce en taille. Dialogue en fugue **M-A Charpentier** Pour un reposoir, H523. Ave verum corpus, H329. Domine Dominus noster, H163. Gaudia Beatae Virginis Mariae, H330. Quam dilecta, H186. De profundis, H232. Usquequo Domine, H196
Marguerite Louise / Gaétan Jarry org
L'Encelade Ⓜ ECL1403 (67' • DDD • T/t)



The title of this disc is 'Motets pour une princesse'. The lady in question was Marie de Lorraine, the Duchesse de Guise. After Charpentier had returned in 1670 from Rome, where he had studied with Carissimi, he entered her employ as composer and singer. Mademoiselle de Guise, as she was known, was a powerful aristocrat who had a large musical establishment; Charpentier remained in her service as *maitre de musique* till her death in 1688.

Mlle de Guise was pious as well as rich, and most of Charpentier's *petits motets* were no doubt written for her establishment. All but one of the six here are for three voices, two treble instruments and continuo; Gaétan Jarry includes flutes as well as violins. Flutes are actually prescribed for the opening *Ave verum*, composed 'for a street-altar'. *Domine Dominus noster* is a setting of Psalm 8 ('O Lord our Governor'). The violins both engage in dialogue with the voices and connect the verses. At the section 'Minuisti eum paulo' ('Thou makest him lower than the angels') a soprano solo is followed by the bass. There is nothing that one can seriously fault, but David Witzak is careful, verging on dull in these: Charpentier's joyful writing deserves more determined, forthright singing. The other bass is no better in *Quam dilecta* ('O how amiable are thy dwellings'); they sound more lively when singing together in the four-voice *Usquequo Domine* ('How long wilt thou forget me?').

The two sopranos and the instrumentalists are fine; if the overall impression is one of blandness, it's partly due to Charpentier's chains of Italianate thirds. The vocal pieces are interspersed with movements from the Boyvin suite. The booklet-note is informative but poorly translated; the identity of the sultry, Bardot-esque figure on the cover is not revealed. **Richard Lawrence**

Chausson · Duparc · Hahn

'Néère'

Chausson Sept Mélodies, Op 2. La chanson bien douce. Le temps des lilas **Duparc** Chanson triste. Romance de Mignon. Phidylé. Au pays où se fait la guerre. L'invitation au voyage **Hahn** Le printemps. Trois jours de vendange. Quand je fus pris au pavillon. Le rossignol des lilas. A Chloris. Etudes Latines - Néère; Lydée; Tyndaris; Pholé; Phyllis
Véronique Gens sop **Susan Manoff** pf
Alpha Ⓜ ALPHA215 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Véronique Gens's new album is an important issue on several fronts.

First and foremost, it is arguably the most perfectly realised recital of French songs since Stéphane Degout's very different 'Mélodies' (Naïve, 4/11). Second, it is quite remarkable and insightful in its programming. At its centre is Chausson's Op 2 set, dating from 1881, much excerpted ('Le colibri' is very famous), but recorded here complete for the first time since Graham Johnson's survey of the composer's songs (Hyperion, 5/01). Around it are grouped works by Duparc and Hahn, the latter represented not only by such familiar items as 'A Chloris' but by songs from his *Etudes Latines*, a mixed solo-choral collection setting texts by Leconte de Lisle, published in 1900. They are quite wonderfully original – their sinewy melodies and pulsing accompaniments are closer in style to Satie's *Gnossiennes* than anything else in Hahn's output – and the disc as a

whole makes a superb case for considering his songs, sometimes thought dilettantish, as being on a level with those of his elder contemporaries.

Gens, as one might expect, is exceptional in this repertoire. Most of the songs are about erotic anticipation and tristesse, and her dark, slightly smoky tone adds to the sensuality of it all. She sings as much off the text as the line, but nothing is nudged or forced in an overtly interventionist way. Neither she nor her pianist Susan Manoff seemingly believe that French song is necessarily about restraint and delicacy, and both are prepared to use bold colours and effects when the situation demands. 'Au pays où se fait la guerre' delivers near-Gothic frissons as a lurch of vocal anxiety and a piano shudder accompany the sound of strange footfalls on the tower stairs, and the arpeggios with which Manoff surrounds the image of the fields coloured 'd'hyacinthe et d'or' in 'L'invitation au voyage' glitter and sparkle like the contents of some sumptuous, decadent jewel box. Elsewhere, poise is all. Gens's 'A Chloris' is one of the best there is, and Hahn's 'Néère', which gives the disc its title, leaves you open-mouthed with its beauty. **Tim Ashley**

Feldman · Cage · Satie

Cage Four^a, ear for EAR (Antiphones)^b. Five^a.

In a Landscape^c **Feldman** Rothko Chapel^d

Satie Gnossiennes^c - No 1; No 3; No 4. Ogives^c - No 1; No 2

Lauren Snouffer sop **Sonja Bruzauskas** mez

L Wayne Ashley ten **Kim Kashkashian** va **Sarah Rothenburg** cpf^d celesta **Steven Schick** perc

Houston Chamber Choir / **Robert Simpson**

ECM New Series Ⓜ 4811796 (70' • DDD)

KIM KASHKASHIAN	MORTON FELDMAN
SARAH ROTHENBERG	ERIK SATIE
STEVEN SCHICK	JOHN CAGE
HOUSTON CHAMBER CHOIR	ROTHKO CHAPEL
ROBERT SIMPSON	

In all my years of reviewing Feldman performances, I've never heard one so catastrophically misconceived as Robert Simpson's jazz-hands misreading of *Rothko Chapel*. I was even tempted to ask Siri – could this be the one time



The Hilliard Ensemble offer Machaut transcriptions on their new ECM album

that Robert Simpson the symphonist tried his hand at conducting Feldman before coming to his senses?

Considering the relative popularity of *Rothko Chapel*, the work has appeared on CD comparatively rarely. Philip Brett's performance (released by the now defunct New Albion label, 10/92) still serves as a paradigm of subtle, sensitive Feldman interpretation, while Simpson goes awry in the first bar. The piece opens with a hushed timpani roll which Feldman, a composer for whom dynamic levels meant more than most, marked *ppp*, but which Simpson allows to slice noisily through the reverby recording. And by the time of Kim Kashkashian's entry three bars later – her entry is marked *mp*, not that the differential is observed – I knew already that this performance had nowhere to go.

Brett's UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus keep tight control over minimal vibrato and take careful notice of Feldman's dynamic bandwidth – the conceptually inscrutable 'barely audible' included. But far from hanging nebulously between this world and the next like the colour spectrum in a Rothko painting, Simpson's lusty, vibrato-rich Houston Chamber Choir sound as though they're about to launch into Monty Python's 'Lumberjack Song'. Kashkashian over-emotes; and quite why the solo vibraphone entry near the end –

arpeggiated quavers marked *ppppp* – needed to crash into view like a freight train remains a complete mystery.

John Cage's delicate choral pieces don't benefit from the Houston Chamber Choir approach, which leaves Sarah Rothenberg's considered performances of Cage's *In a Landscape* and miniatures by Satie to restore some sanity. Not enough, though, to forgive what went before. Best save your hard-earned moolah. **Philip Clark**

Holliger

Machaut Transcriptions

Muriel Cantoreggi, Geneviève Strosser, Jürg Dähler *vas* **The Hilliard Ensemble**
ECM New Series ④ 476 5121 (65' • DDD)



This is the first of two recordings in this issue in which a living composer dialogues with Machaut, the first composer to have self-consciously projected a creative persona for his contemporaries (the second being Soupir Editions' Philippe Leroux disc on page 78). Here it is Heinz Holliger, whose multi-movement *Machaut-Transkriptionen* alternates works by Machaut with 'transcriptions' based on them with a greater or lesser degree of audible freedom.

The cycle begins with three such pairs, Machaut being represented by members of The Hilliard Ensemble and Holliger by three solo violas. The Swiss composer's contributions become progressively lengthier and the second half of the cycle consists of more substantial pieces, first for all four Hilliards, then for the violas, and finally for both groups together. The cumulative quality of this scheme is formally effective, as is Machaut's progressive dissolution (in a positive sense) into an idiom that incorporates both him and Holliger.

To my ear, the later transcriptions are the more successful because less literal: sticking to the letter of Machaut's text imparts a degree of predictability that Holliger's scrubbed and smudged harmonics don't quite offset. The *Hoquetus David* transcription is particularly fine, however, and from there the cycle takes off, achieving some strikingly pathetic accents in the final piece.

As with the Leroux cycle, this is required listening for anyone who is interested in confronting old and new and recognises the affinity between them. The performances give a convincing account of the cycle's narrative arc, but The Hilliard Ensemble sound unsure of themselves, both in Holliger and (more surprisingly) in

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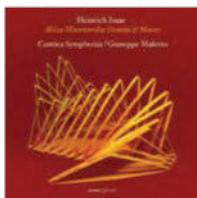
Giuseppe Maletto recording Heinrich Isaac with Cantica Symphonia on Glossa

Machaut. Whereas both composers present them with pungent asperities that ought to be met head-on (not to say relished), a certain tentativeness puts them at odds with their instrumental counterparts, suggesting a collaboration that hasn't quite gelled.

Fabrice Fitch

Isaac

Missa Misericordias Domini. Ave ancilla trinitatis. Ave regina caelorum. Inviolata. O decus Ecclesiae. Rogamus te. Quae est ista. Sub tuum praesidium
Cantica Symphonia / Giuseppe Maletto
Glossa (F) GCDP31908 (70' • DDD • T/t)



Cantica Symphonia are a mixed vocal and instrumental ensemble long associated with the works of Guillaume Dufay, to whom they have devoted five discs. Giuseppe Maletto and the group now offer a whole album of works by Heinrich Isaac (c1450–1517) which includes the first recording of the *Missa Misericordias Domini* and a selection of motets, four of which are also previously unrecorded. That there is so much of Isaac's output still to be explored

on record should come as little surprise: not only was he prolific but he has often been eclipsed by his more famous contemporary, Josquin Desprez.

The disc opens with a sizeable setting of *Ave regina caelorum*, set to a spacious texture for four voices. The singers choose sprightly tempi for each invocation and create a bubbling sense of urgency through each of the carefully plaited lines. The Mass maintains this thoughtful but subtly urgent style, carefully balancing overall texture while maintaining the clarity of each vocal line and preserving the vocal personality of each singer. The voices are extraordinarily well matched and this CD continues Glossa's tradition of recording with a single microphone pair. The sound is considered and mellow, yet each individual moment is brilliantly engaged, and it crackles with energy throughout.

Of the remaining motets, *Inviolata* and *O decus Ecclesiae* stand out for their sheer magnitude, and the addition of instruments to voices moves us from an intimate chapel sound towards a greater sense of occasion. Sinewy fiddles add a strident grain while sackbuts and slide trumpets bring both grandeur and wistfulness in equal measures. *Inviolata* in particular clearly presents

Isaac's slow, patient cantus firmus almost like a rope around which garlands of polyphony are woven, and in *O decus Ecclesiae* changeable tempi, unexpected on first hearing, gradually reveal themselves as wonderful moments of rejoicing and excitement. **Edward Breen**

Korngold

'Complete Songs'
Adrienne Pieczonka sop Konrad Jarnot bar
Reinild Mees pf
Capriccio (B) ② C5252 (150' • DDD)



Those who find Korngold's music difficult to take may baulk at the thought of a two-disc collection of his complete songs including previously unrecorded off-cuts, alternative versions, occasional pieces and extensive juvenilia ('Der Knabe und das Veilchen' is the work of a seven-year-old). Be that as it may, Capriccio's project must be judged a major success. While individual items have been championed by such illustrious performers as Dietrich Henschel, Anne Sofie von Otter, Sarah Connolly and Renée

Fleming, Adrianne Pieczonka and Konrad Jarnot explore further and are by no means outshone.

They make a slightly odd couple, this superstar Ariadne/Prima Donna and her Music Master, the latter allocated the lion's share of the songs (there are no duets). Sopranos tackling Wagner as well as Strauss in the opera house do not always retain Pieczonka's bloom and freshness in recital, and her vibrato only rarely hits the microphone unflatteringly. Brighton-born and German-domiciled, Jarnot is a natural recitalist, glorious in lyrical reverie, his light baritone strained now and then at high decibels. Reinild Mees navigates the challenging keyboard-writing with a rare combination of tact and sensitivity so that one barely registers the absence of the orchestra in the operatic excerpts or the Op 14 *Abschiedlieder*, source of the relatively familiar 'Sterbelied' after Christina Rossetti. Straussian Sachertorte is by no means the collection's only mode. There's early material indebted to Brahms, Wolf and Mahler, and the more utilitarian Shakespeare settings of the 1930s include a haunting take on 'Desdemona's [Willow] Song' that might have been composed by Moeran or Warlock.

A little chunky design-wise, the accompanying booklet contains helpful notes by Brendan Carroll and biographies of the performers. So far so good, but, notwithstanding the singers' clarity of diction and a lovely, lucid recording, the patchy provision of texts is a real drawback. In several cases we are told that permission to reprint relevant material was not forthcoming. Worse, as the settings are in either German or English, only listeners fluent in both will be unfazed by the absence of translations.

Take the *Drei Lieder*, Op 22. The first song, the glorious 'Was du mir bist', cheekily recycled in the Suite Korngold wrote for Paul Wittgenstein, is overtly melodic. Its successor is more speculative in manner, albeit less so than the virtually Expressionist Op 18 sequence. An upbeat closing number soars stratospherically... but why? Though Carroll assures us of the composer's singular ability to reflect the mood of a poetic text, most will be none the wiser. Korngold's last song, the 'Sonett für Wien', refashions a theme from *Escape Me Never*, his final Warner Brothers score. It's wide-ranging in every sense, a tribute to the city that meant everything to him but which sadly failed to respond in kind after the Second World War.

Strongly recommended and an important step in the composer's rehabilitation.

David Gutman

Leroux

Leroux *Quid sit musicus?*. Cinq Poèmes de Jean Grosjean **Machaut** Inviolata genitrix. Ma fin est mon commencement. Sans cuer **Senlèches** La harpe de mélodie **Ensemble Solistes XXI / Rachid Saphir** **Soupir Editions** (S228 (54' • DDD • T)



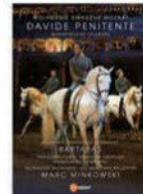
Machaut's dual status as poet and composer seems ideally suited to launch a work in which the relation of text and music is closely scrutinised. This recording combines two cycles by the French composer Philippe Leroux for digitally treated vocal consort, one with instruments and one without. The five pieces that make up *Quid sit musicus?* are based on both the text and music of several works by Machaut and his younger contemporary Jacob de Senlèches, all of which appear embedded within Leroux's compositions. In most cases the new works are literally split in two by the old, though the cuts are rarely clean, tending to bleed into each other. In a further process of interleaving, Leroux adds the five elements of the second cycle: towards the end of the work, the three elements (including Machaut, that is) are thoroughly interpenetrated while remaining perfectly recognisable. This is very skilfully done and repays close listening, helped along by the always subtle interaction of acoustic and digital elements. The text-setting is essentially phonetic, and Rachid Safir's soloists mine its dramatic potential most invigoratingly; vowels give rise to held chords whose digital extension, which can extend over several minutes, are remarkably moving.

Leroux's idiom is such that pastiche would be quite inappropriate, and this is one of the most refreshing aspects of this cycle: Machaut is neither exoticised nor reduced to a few clichés, as all too often happens when composers engage with early music. Anyone interested in contemporary music and early polyphony and their intersections will find this stimulating at the very least; I would say it's compelling. My only criticism is that the earlier music is not quite so convincingly rendered as the later: in one or two cases a voice is given in the wrong octave, which skews Machaut's counterpoint in a way that I suspect isn't intended. Finally, the sound recording is as detailed as one would expect, given the close integration of digital and acoustic means. **Fabrice Fitch**

Mozart

Davide penitente, K469^a. **Adagio and Fugue**, K546 **Christiane Karg sop** **Marianne Crebassa mez** **Stanislas de Barbeyrac ten** **Salzburg Bach Choir**; **Les Musiciens du Louvre / Marc Minkowski** **C Major Entertainment** (DVD 731608; Blu-ray 731704 (73' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

^aRecorded live at the Felsenreitschule, Salzburg, January 2015



Well, I'm not sure whether I should be reviewing this unusual DVD for *Gramophone* or for *Horse & Hound*. In 1785 Mozart was commissioned to compose a piece for a Viennese charity. Pressed for time, he adapted the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* of his unfinished Mass in C minor, K427, to an Italian text possibly written by da Ponte; the only new music consisted of two arias and an accompanied 'cadenza' towards the end. The cantata was performed in the Burgtheater on March 13 and 15. The soloists included Caterina Cavalieri and Valentin Adamberger, who had taken part in the first performances of *Die Entführung* three years earlier: the *Allegro* of 'Tra l'oscure' is another concession to Cavalieri's 'flexible throat' (Mozart's words), and 'A te, fra tanto affanni' is first cousin to Belmonte's 'Wenn der Freude Tränen fliessen'.

So much for the background. But you want to hear about the horses, don't you? Some readers will have attended a morning session at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, where the Lipizzaner are put through their paces to a recording of Strauss waltzes and the like. This is a live, upmarket version from the Felsenreitschule in Salzburg. The musicians are placed in the three tiers of arcades; the conductor is in the arena, in which the horses prance, trot and canter. It is a miracle of coordination. The drawback is the selective eye of the camera. Twelve horses and riders take their bows, but I could never count more than eight together in the performance. Sometimes a correlation between humans and beasts can be discerned, sometimes not. The soprano duet is matched by two greys; two groups of four horses wheel around in the double chorus. But you can't tell if the horses enter in turn in the fugal Terzetto; they don't in the fugal last chorus. The musical performance is good, the equine ballet is graceful. But why *Davide penitente*, particularly? Search me.

Richard Lawrence



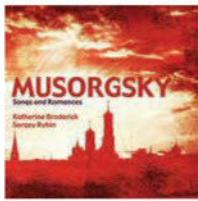
Supremely accomplished: Katherine Broderick recording Mussorgsky with Sergey Rybin for Stone Records

Mussorgsky

'Songs and Romances'

Songs and Dances of Death. Sunless. Night.
Gathering Mushrooms. Desire. Darling Savishna.
Hebrew Song. Tell me why, dear maiden.
Apparition. Where are you, little star?

Katherine Broderick sop Sergey Rybin pf
Stone Records © 5060192 780581 (58' • DDD • T/t)



Men – particularly basses and baritones – tend to have a monopoly on

Mussorgsky's songs, so it's welcome to see soprano Katherine Broderick attempting to break the stranglehold. Leaving aside the cycle *The Nursery* (which has been recorded by several female singers, including Elisabeth Söderström), she opens with a collection of eight songs, before two great cycles: the brooding, introverted *Sunless*, followed by the *Songs and Dances of Death*.

Broderick's soprano has Wagnerian power but she controls it well to produce gorgeous *pianissimos*. 'Desire' and 'Hebrew Song' find her scaling down her voice beautifully, while 'Where are you, little star?' finds her caressing the vocal line tenderly. She can do wit too, and 'Gathering Mushrooms' is full of the sort of peasant characterisation you'd

find in *Boris Godunov*. *Sunless* is a difficult cycle to bring off, full of resignation, but Broderick colours her voice enough to offer contrast. She is aided by Sergey Rybin's shimmering accompaniments, adding luminosity to these flickering scores.

Galina Vishnevskaya recorded the *Song and Dances of Death* in Shostakovich's orchestration (EMI, 2/78). I'd love to hear Broderick do the same – she has all Vishnevskaya's decibels but without the excess vibrato. There is inexorable power in the finale to 'Serenade', a hypnotic 'Trepak' and a no-holds-barred 'Field-Marshals' you wouldn't want to mess with. She lacks the extrovert characterisation of Boris Christoff (EMI, 8/89), from his cooing 'Lullaby' to his roaring 'Field-Marshals', but then Christoff is in a league of his own when it comes to Mussorgsky songs. Broderick's is a supremely accomplished account.

Recorded in the warm acoustic of Oxford's St John the Evangelist Church, this is a most enjoyable recital. Praise too for Rybin's excellent booklet essay and the inclusion of texts and translations.

Mark Pullinger

Rachmaninov

Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Op 31
Berlin Radio Chorus / Nicolas Fink
Carus © CARUS83 407 (60' • DDD • T/t)



Less well known than his setting of the *All-Night Vigil (Vespers)*, Rachmaninov's earlier *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom* – it was written in 1910 – was nevertheless an important stepping stone to the masterly choral writing in the latter work. While the model of Tchaikovsky's setting is clearly audible (the second antiphon provides a good example), Rachmaninov's own distinctive voice is also far from absent, as the first antiphon, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul', and the double-choir setting of the Lord's Prayer demonstrate.

This recording includes, on the one hand, some of the petitions (hardly 'interjections', *pace* the booklet-note) intoned by the priest or deacon, but, on the other, omits the little litanies. This is a practical solution, though it is surely somewhat contradictory to endeavour to give the piece a liturgical 'frame' and at the same time compromise its structure by taking elements of that frame away. The petitions that remain are beautifully sung by soloists from within the choir, though with a very Russified pronunciation of the Slavonic (and with some inconsistencies).

Nicolas Fink directs a beautifully shaped performance – the Trisagion and the Lord's Prayer are among the highlights, as also are the Creed and the Anaphora, their text-driven style handled with aplomb. The choir respond extremely well to the challenge of achieving a 'Slavic sound', helped by some excellent low basses.

For a more complete experience, I recommend the Corydon Singers' recording on Hyperion, for which Protodeacon Peter Scorer intoned the priest's petitions. However, the choral singing on this new release is not only of the highest quality but beautifully recorded at the Auenkirche in Berlin. **Ivan Moody**

Selected comparison:

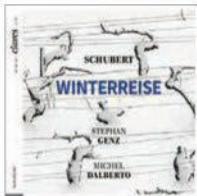
Corydon Singers, Best (6/95^R) (HYPE) CDH55318

Schubert

Winterreise, D911

Stephan Genz bar Michel Dalberto pf

Claves Ⓛ 50-1606 (68' • DDD)



Genz and Dalberto set out their stall in the opening 'Gute Nacht': a brisk, inexorably

trudging tempo, sparse staccato textures, broad-spanned phrasing. There is affectionate regret in the major-key final verse, sung in a tender *mezza voce*, but no lingering sentiment. From the outset we sense that Schubert's 'grim journey', as Samuel Beckett dubbed it, will be unflinchingly undertaken, devoid of self-pity. Other baritones, notably Fischer-Dieskau, in his various recordings, and Matthias Goerne with Brendel (Philips), have explored the cycle's psychopathology more disturbingly. Gerald Finley, in a recent recording with Julius Drake (Hyperion), stresses elegy and the pain of loss. Genz's wanderer can protest and despair. 'Wetterfahne' is sung with mocking bitterness, while 'Erstarrung' has an anguished, almost frantic urgency. But with Dalberto emphasising the percussive bleakness of Schubert's piano-writing, the abiding impression is of unsentimental, stoical resignation to his fate. This man, you feel, will somehow survive, if only at the margins of existence.

Even amid the wanderer's encroaching exhaustion, the sense of forward motion is never lost. Phrasing, as ever, in long lines, Genz and Dalberto remind you that No 10, 'Rast', is marked *mässig* (ie *moderato*), and evoke a weary trudge rather than stasis. 'Die Krähe' rivals Peter Schreier, with Schiff (Decca), as the swiftest on disc, and distils a palpable sense of panic. Some may feel Genz

underplays the impassioned cry of 'Wein auf meiner Hoffnung Grab' ('Weep on the grave of my hopes') in 'Letzte Hoffnung', sung strictly in tempo. But like the brusque, even resentful, address to the sleeping villagers in 'Im Dorfe' and the unflinching onward trudge of 'Der Wegweiser' (shades here of the Andante of the *Great C major Symphony*), this is of a piece with the whole performance.

In 'Das Wirtshaus' Genz embodies a physical and spiritual weariness without histrionics. He then hurls out manic defiance in 'Mut', where Dalberto underlines the military march parody, before the two final songs. 'Die Nebensonnen' is ruefully resigned, yet heeding Schubert's *nicht zu langsam* marking, while 'Der Leiermann', sung without nuance, exudes a spectral calm. Other versions of this fathomless cycle, including those mentioned above, may be more immediately engrossing. But if you prefer a predominantly brisk interpretation that tends to stress stoicism and ironic bitterness over pathos and incipient derangement, you'll find that Genz, in fine voice, and Dalberto give a profoundly thought-through performance. For me, at least, they pass the crucial test of making Schubert's fathomless cycle a cathartic experience. **Richard Wigmore**

Tavener · Moody

'Tavener Conducts Tavener'

Moody O isplendor Tavener A Buddhist Miniature. A Cradle Song. The Founder's Prayer. Ikon of the Nativity. The Lamb. A New Commandment. Nunc dimittis (second setting). O, do not move. Resurrection - Paradise Choir. Take him, earth, for cherishing. O that we were there! Sunrise in Your Heart. They are all gone into the world of light. Two Hadiths

Cappella Nova / Alan Tavener

Linn Records Ⓛ CKD539 (74' • DDD • T/t)



The title of Cappella Nova's latest recording is neat, but also confusing. 'Tavener Conducts Tavener' is not, as glance might suggest, a belated release of the British composer directing his own music. It is instead a play on the name of the ensemble's own conductor, Alan Tavener – the composer's third cousin, and the first Tavener of the disc. Family connections aside, do we really need another collage recording of John Tavener's choral music – already so dominant a presence in so slim a slice of the contemporary classical market? In this case, yes.

The Scottish ensemble have a unique claim to champion works they themselves commissioned and premiered, including the 1988 epic *Resurrection* (whose Paradise Choir music bookends the disc, and which has yet to receive a full recording), *A Buddhist Miniature* and *Ikon of the Nativity*, and sister-ensemble Canty's *Two Hadiths*. In filling out the programme, Alan Tavener wisely makes his choices from the margins of Tavener's large output, choosing little-known and still-less-recorded motets including *Take him, earth, for cherishing* – the composer at his most darkly angular – and *They are all gone out into the world of light* to spice the inevitable *The Lamb* and familiar *Cradle Song*.

Recorded in the resonant acoustic of Stirling's Church of the Holy Rude, Capella Nova's comparatively small forces come up rich and gloriously misty round the edges, while still achieving enough clarity to pull off the precision-work of *The Lamb* and *Two Hadiths*; the bray harp's *glissandos* in the latter scatter notes like bright beads, catching the ear among so much choral homophony.

But while the ensemble's lower voices are carefully blended, there's a stridency to the sopranos that makes for some harsh moments, particularly jarring in the exposed upper-voices writing of *O that we were there!*. This isn't the best Tavener-singing out there (for that you're still looking at *The Sixteen*, *The Tallis Scholars* and the *Holst Singers*); but, as an addition to the composer's recorded catalogue, 'Tavener Conducts Tavener' is valuable. **Alexandra Coglan**

J Wolfe

Anthracite Fields

The Choir of Trinity Wall Street / Julian Wachner; Bang on a Can All-Stars

Cantaloupe Ⓛ CA2111 (60' • DDD)



Anthracite Fields is the Pulitzer Prize-winning oratorio for choir and six-piece amplified ensemble (specifically the Bang on a Can All-Stars) by New York composer Julia Wolfe. Its subject is early-20th-century coal mining in Pennsylvania, where Wolfe grew up in the 1960s. The text comes from accident indexes, newspaper ads and political speeches. Anthracite is the purest form of coal, the diamond in the rough that is dirty, loud and dangerous to mine – Wolfe's music is never shy about its symbolism. She visited pits and museums and retired miners for her research and their claustrophobia and hard graft is writ



Stephan Genz and Michel Dalberto recording Winterreise for Claves, a fine new account stressing the 'stoicism and ironic bitterness' of the cycle

plain in the score. This is social history in music, which I suspect ticked several boxes for the Pulitzer judges.

There are five movements. 'Foundation' is dark and gritty, with clanging eruptions and men chanting the names of miners injured in the pits. The singing is rough, static and relentless: if you drew its contours, you'd get blocks of single colour. 'Breaker Boys' is a schoolyard rhyme, perky, nervy and disturbing, about the boys who picked debris off the coal with bare hands. 'Speech' juxtaposes a solo manifesto with thick ensemble responses; 'Flowers' adds some warmth with the voice of a miner's daughter who describes her family's garden. Instrumental writing in the last movement, 'Appliances', flickers like a faulty lightbulb while singers name activities that require electricity. 'Bake a cake, drill a hole, go to the gym,' they intone over a murky rumpus.

The writing is confident, the playing is slick and the singing is arrestingly unfussy. Plenty of the classic post-minimalist, rock-tinted Bang on a Can trademarks are there – which figures, given Wolfe's founding role alongside Michael Gordon and David Lang in the late 1980s. Wolfe says she thinks of herself as a renegade but the Bang on a Can sound has by now adopted its own conventions. Vicky Chow's piano rhythms pulsate and interlock; David

Cossin's drums add a self-consciously grungy beat; Mark Stewart's electric guitar provides an industrial thrum. It all feels a bit obvious, and a bit dated.

Kate Molleson

'Cantates et petits macarons'

Clérambault *La muse de l'opéra, ou Les caractères lyriques* **F Couperin** *Le Parnasse, ou L'apothéose de Corelli* **Marais** *Sonnerie de Ste-Geneviève du Mont-de-Paris* **Montéclair** *Le retour de la paix* **Rameau** *Le berger fidèle*

Natalia Kawałek *mez*

Il Giardino d'Amore / Stefan Plewniak *vln*

Èvœ *EVOE002 (70') • DDD • T/t*



This disc from Poland consists of a pleasant mixture of French cantatas and instrumental pieces which can be enjoyed as a straightforward concert. They date from the first three decades of the 18th century, the period between the death of Lully and the rise of Rameau, which is perhaps still under-appreciated. The earliest is *Le retour de la paix*; exhorting mortals not to seek 'futile glory', it would not have gone down well with the warlike Louis XIV. Montéclair employs a flute to illustrate the possibility of peace and,

paradoxically, a trumpet to celebrate its achievement. *Le berger fidèle* is a foretaste of the opera composer that Rameau was to become. Clérambault's *La muse de l'opéra* is, not surprisingly, equally dramatic. Rushing scales on the violin illustrate a storm; a sleep scene calls up violin and flute in unison; while birdsong is airily represented by voice and flute with no continuo bass. Natalia Kawałek, more soprano than mezzo, sings all three cantatas with bright, clear tone.

The Marais sonata is a passacaglia where the violin and gamba disport themselves over a three-note bell-like phrase. It's mesmerisingly played by Stefan Plewniak and Lucia Krommer, though the latter sounds rather distant. Plewniak is joined by Enrique Gómez-Cabrero Fernández for Couperin's two-violin *Apotheosis of Corelli*. This is beautifully done, especially the well-sprung rhythms of the second movement and the flowing quavers of the third.

The presentation is a disaster. You are lured into the cardboard folder and the booklet by a picture of scrumptious-looking macaroons. After that comes a farrago of misspellings, typos, mistranslations and sheer gibberish. The translations are printed separately from the text, and no timings are given. O my, O my. **Richard Lawrence**

'Coeur'

'French Courtly Songs from the Late 16th Century'

Anonymous Allons vieille imperfaite Beaulieu

Helas que me faut-il faire Boyer Que feray-je?

Caiétan Mais voyez mon cher esmoy Carroubel

Passpieds de Bretaigne. Spagnolette Costeley

J'ayme trop mieux souffrir la mort Guédron

Belle qui m'avez blessé. Bien qu'un cruel

martire. Tant et tant il m'ennuye tant Le Blanc

Les mariniers adorent un beau jour. Quel

secours faut-il que j'atende. Sus! mon lut d'un

accord pitoyable Le Roy O combien est

heureuse Lorenzini Fantaisie

Le Poème Harmonique /

Vincent Dumestre gtr/theo

Alpha ® ALPHA213 (64' • DDD • T/t)



The discography of the *air de cour*, though not huge, is very distinguished, and

Le Poème Harmonique have contributed to it more significantly than any other ensemble. A triptych of discs about 10 years ago made a real impact, presenting some of the best-known pieces of the repertory as consort songs, or with a more substantial continuo section than the straight lute accompaniment that had prevailed previously. This winning formula is revisited here, with comparable success for the most part.

Whereas their previous recordings focused on the genre's well-known exponents, this one features some lesser-known figures (though the incomparable Pierre Guédron puts in a few appearances). His *Bien qu'un cruel martire* is justly one of the recital's high points but the others come from these minor masters. One such is Gérard de Beaulieu's *Helas que me faut-il faire*, which opens the disc; another, Jean Boyer's brooding *Que feray-je?*, hints at the darkest tragedy, while Costeley's *J'ayme trop mieux souffrir la mort* harks back to the strophic songs of an earlier generation. All these are fully worthy of the ensemble's preceding recitals. True, two or three of the selections towards the end of the disc aren't quite on the same level, so that the recital loses a little in intensity as it draws to a conclusion. One could have done, perhaps, with another risqué item like the anonymous *Allons vieille imperfaite*, or a drinking song (of which there are plenty), for when these singers let their hair down, they bring the house down with it. But that might have worked against the programme's emotional tenor, which is high seriousness and artifice. The continuo group turn in yet

another outstanding performance, and at the risk of repeating myself, Claire Lefilliâtre's is a voice that one does not tire of hearing. **Fabrice Fitch**

'French Connections'

L Berkeley Five Poems of WH Auden, Op 53

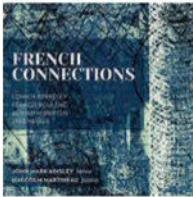
Britten The Holy Sonnets of John Donne, Op 35.

Fancie Heggie Friendly Persuasions Poulenc Tel

jour telle nuit. Bleuet. Fancy

John Mark Ainsley ten Malcolm Martineau pf

Linn Records ® CKD477 (69' • DDD • T/t)



The booklet-writer does his best but it is not easy to work Britten's *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* into a programme entitled 'French Connections', although John Mark Ainsley's searing performance of them fully justifies their being included. From the first anguished outburst in 'Oh my blake soule' Ainsley finds the nub of these spare, pointedly expressive songs, whether they be of brooding grief as in 'O might those sighes and teares', vehement admission of sinfulness in 'Thou hast made me' or bleak serenity as in 'Death be not proud'. Malcolm Martineau's perceptive accompaniments echo the poignancy of the sentiments voiced in the texts, and the collaboration between him and Ainsley is one of mature understanding both of one another's interpretative stance and of the sophistication of Britten's language.

Elsewhere the French connection is more secure, with Poulenc's Paul Eluard settings in *Tel jour telle nuit* alongside Lennox Berkeley's *Five Poems of WH Auden* – the link being more to do with Berkeley's studies in Paris than with his choice of poet. Again, Ainsley is superb in finding and conveying the particular qualities that lend both Berkeley and Poulenc their musical identities. It's also good to have on disc the set of four songs entitled *Friendly Persuasions* by the American composer Jake Heggie, of which Ainsley and Martineau gave the world premiere at the Wigmore Hall in 2008. This is a sort of 'American in Paris' tribute, with cameos of four French leading lights who were close to Poulenc – Wanda Landowska, Pierre Bernac, Raymond Linossier and Eluard – all delivered here beguilingly. **Geoffrey Norris**

'Music, When Soft Voices Die'

Bridge Autumn. The Bee. Music, when soft

voices die. O weary hearts Elgar Three

Part-Songs, Op 18 - No 1, O happy eyes; No 2,

Love Moeran Songs of Springtime Parry Six

Modern Lyrics Stanford At the mid-hour of night. It is not the tear. O breathe not his name. Shall we go dance Vaughan Williams Three Elizabethan Part-Songs. Fain would I change that note. Love is a sickness

Quink Vocal Ensemble

Brilliant ® 95216 (68' • DDD • T)



Is there a less fashionable genre than the part-song? Despite attempts by the likes of Britten, Moeran and Finzi to mould it into something more contemporary in the 20th century, the partsong remains stubbornly synonymous with its Victorian and Edwardian heyday and the lavender-scented works of Elgar, Stanford and Parry.

Paul Spicer and his Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir have been valiantly championing this music in solid recordings of Stanford (Somm, 12/13) and Delius & Ireland (2/13), but they've largely been alone. Now they've got competition from Dutch vocal quartet Quink – a group whose relationship with English repertoire is both long and strong.

Not a hint of accent blots enunciation – by turns percussive (Bridge's 'The Bee') and sensuously blurred (Moeran 'The River-God's Song') – that rivals the group's tuning for precision. The blend is that of singers who have worked together for decades: even, balanced, finding all the light and shade these unashamedly sentimental settings need to flourish.

Performances are excellent throughout – faultless, even – so the question here becomes one of repertoire itself, Stanford's *Six Modern Lyrics*, Moeran's *Songs of Springtime* and music by Elgar, Bridge and Vaughan Williams that is rather more variable in quality. Elgar's 'O happy eyes' and 'Love' are cloyingly sweet, even when tempered by Quink's vocal restraint, and Stanford's 'If I had but two little wings' and Moeran's 'Spring, the sweet spring' are barely less ghastly.

The good stuff comes from Bridge and Vaughan Williams. The latter's 'Silence and Music' is a marvel – chromatic, uncertain, exploratory – while Bridge's settings unfold with all the composer's delicate melodic instincts, benefiting from Bridge's instinct for choosing good poetry (something Elgar sorely lacked). Quink do this repertoire as well as anyone could. The question of whether it's worth doing, however, is one even they can't resolve.

Alexandra Coghlan

GRAMOPHONE Collector

BUDAPEST MUSIC CENTRE

Richard Whitehouse listens to a quartet of choral albums from the adventurous Hungarian label



The Saint Ephraim Male Choir: spirited and idiomatic in Bartók and folk

For two decades the Budapest Music Center has issued a steady flow of recordings that takes in the extent of Hungarian music, not least its foremost living composers, Kurtág and Eötvös. Four recent releases focusing on *a cappella* choral music are considered here.

Most important is a two-disc set devoted to the complete choral works of **Bartók**, a notable area of his output that has inevitably been overlooked outside Hungary but which features music that is hardly less characteristic than his chamber or orchestral works. Aside from the languorous early part-song *Evening*, these are settings of traditional and folk texts – ranging from the concise and animated 27 Choruses for children's and female voices to the three texturally intricate and harmonically complex items that comprise *From Olden Times* for male voices; also included here are two sets of Slovak folksongs in both their Slovakian and Hungarian guises. Such pieces are far removed from the functional ideal as espoused by Bartók's contemporary Kodály, yet are engaging and satisfying as music – not least when given with the conviction of students from the Liszt Academy of Music and Eötvös Loránd University under László Dobszay, with pianist Zoltán Kocsis adding his inimitable presence in two pieces. Anyone who has fought shy of such music should certainly try this.

Those, conversely, who would prefer a selection of these pieces should go to the disc **Bartók and Folk**, on which the composer's six works for male choruses are interspersed with Hungarian and Slovak folk music that presents many of these traditional sources in something approaching their original incarnation. Under the astute guidance of Tamás Bubnó, the Saint Ephraim Male Choir gives performances that are hardly less spirited or idiomatic than those on the previous set, with Márk Bubnó making an evocative contribution on *gardon* (described as a 'percussive cello') and Balázs Szokolay Dongó with the bracing sounds of flute, bagpipe and *tárogató* (an instrument of Turkish origin which approximates to the clarinet). The overall sequence offers an engrossing interplay of folk and art music, intriguing and provocative by turns.

That liturgical music has not been neglected by a younger generation of composers is evident from the disc **Hungarian Contemporary Vespers**. Those two sequences featured here, moreover, are subtly contrasted as to content and aesthetic. Thus the *Sunday Vespers* by Zsolt Serei (b1954) remains audibly faithful to its medieval sources by interspersing plainsong with settings whose allegiance to tradition is continually yet restrainedly underlined. On the other hand, *Vesperae per annum* by Péter Zombola (b1983) is a longer and more elaborate service that

ranges freely over the ancient and modern of sacred choral music, its often dense textures offset by bells and a frequently hypnotic organ part. The performances by Schola Cantorum Budapestiensis, as directed by Tamás Bubnó and János Mezei, leave nothing to be desired.

The Saint Ephraim Male Choir is featured on the final release here. **Oriente** **Lumen II** refers to the second of its annual series which aims to present the Greek-Byzantine liturgy in the secular context of a public concert. This two-disc overview, edited from performances given during 2013-14, features a wide range of music that juxtaposes traditional Moldavian, Bulgarian and Greek chants with pieces by composers over two centuries apart; among them (relatively) familiar items by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, alongside present-day figures such as Márk Bubnó and György Philipp, then closing with the powerful *Te Deum* by Dmitri Bortnyansky. The conviction of the music-making, once again directed by Tamás Bubnó, is enhanced by the spacious yet immediate ambience of St Stephen's Basilica in Budapest that places a discreet halo of resonance around the solo contributions of singers Márta Sebestyén, Tünde Szabóki and Nektaria Karantzi – resulting in a composite choral work as diverse as it is involving.

Each of these releases comes with succinct yet highly detailed annotations that are never less than informative, but it is a pity that English translations could not be included on either of the Bartók discs (could these not have been made available via the BMC website?), while the decorative typeface used in the booklet for the complete choral works is hardly designed for easy or pleasurable reading. Reservations aside, these are valuable discs that fill gaps in their repertoires and further confirmation of BMC's commitment to the cause of Hungarian music. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Bartók Complete Choral Works
choirs / László Dobszay
BMC M ② BMCCD186



Bartók 'Bartók and Folk'
St Ephraim Male Choir / Tamás Bubnó
BMC P BMCCD220



Hungarian Contemporary Vespers
Schola Cantorum Budapestiensis
BMC P BMCCD211



Oriente Lumen II
St Ephraim Male Choir
BMC M ② BMCCD217

REISSUES

Rob Cowan on a fine Rudolf Barshai memento, and **James Jolly** welcomes sets of Emil Gilels and the Quartetto Italiano

Alongside the greats

The fifth anniversary of viola-player and conductor Rudolf Barshai's death (in November 2010) is marked by the release of a fascinating and musically valuable 20-CD set from ICA, **A Tribute to Rudolf Barshai**, its rich contents a mixture of the familiar and the unfamiliar.

The first three CDs feature Barshai as viola soloist, sensually alluring in Cecil Forsyth's *Celtic Song* and Ravel's *Pavane*, warmly entertaining in a sequence from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* and ascetically majestic in the whole of Bach's Partita in D minor for solo violin transcribed for viola. Beautiful too are Debussy's late Sonata for flute, viola and harp with Alexander Korneev and Olga Erdeli, and a Handel Concerto arranged by Henri Casadesus (the same piece that Primrose recorded so memorably for RCA Victor).

Rare Russian fare arrives in the guise of an 18th-century concerto 'attributed' to Ivan Khandozhkin (by the musical hoaxer Mikhail Goldstein apparently) with some staggering playing, and 20th-century works by Revol Bunin and Vladimir Kryukov, attractive music that few of us will have encountered before. Supraphon has already put out a CD of the Kogan-Barshai-Rostropovich Trio playing Beethoven's Op 3, and their Op 9 No 1 is equally superb. Fauré's First Piano Quartet with Emil Gilels and Shostakovich's Quintet with the composer himself at the piano transcend time and the limitations of dated sound with the sort of ease that only the greatest recordings command.

Of particular note are three Shostakovich string quartet performances, the First involving an early incarnation of the Borodin Quartet (with Nina Barshai playing second violin and Rudolf viola) but even more remarkable are the Third and Fourth Quartets with Julian Sitkovetsky (Dmitri's father, first violin), Anton Sharoev and Yakov Slobodkin. These are without question the finest performances that I have ever heard, the Fourth especially, with its

defiant use of Jewish-type dance motifs. The same quartet offers a compelling and finely detailed account of Beethoven's First *Rasumovsky* Quartet, while the same CD also includes a famously exuberant reading of Tchaikovsky's sextet *Souvenir de Florence* with a stellar line-up topped and tailed by Leonid Kogan and Rostropovich (not to be confused with a later stereo recording, also with Rostropovich, recently reissued on Alto).

Baroque repertoire with Barshai's star ensemble, the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, includes music by Albinoni, Vivaldi (including *The Four Seasons*) and Bach, the latter represented by the Fourth *Brandenburg Concerto* and the two principal violin concertos with David Oistrakh – typically polished and urbane readings, poised in every phrase – though for me the unmissable Bach highlights are the E major Violin Concerto with Leonid Kogan and the D minor Double with Kogan and Elizaveta Gilels, the quiet closing moments of the slow movement of the Double just about as affecting as one could hope for.

Barshai's Moscow Chamber Mozart recordings deserve a box to themselves (there's plenty in the Melodiya archive, many of them in stereo), though what we have here is enticement enough, the Symphonies Nos 29, 35 and 40 typically fleet and dynamic, the finales of Nos 35 and 40 being good places to sample. When it comes to Mozart's *Sinfonia concertante* for violin and viola, I would personally opt for Oistrakh father and son (Decca or BBC Legends) in preference to the Oistrakh/Barshai recording here, which is less personal in tone. Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto with Kogan and Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21 with Gilels more than match one's high expectations, as does an all-Haydn programme (Symphonies Nos 49 and 104, plus the D major Concerto, again with Gilels). Interesting that the live (mono) account of Shostakovich's Symphony No 14 with Zara



Rudolf Barshai: an unmissable set from the archives

Dolukhanova and Yevgeny Nesterenko (1971), though full of insight, has less of an edge to it than the stereo Barshai recording put out by EMI/Melodiya (3/71) with Margarita Miroshnikova and Yevgeny Vladimirov, both of whom took part in the 1969 premiere performances.

Commercial EMI recordings of Schubert's Fifth, Tippett's Double Concerto (with the Bath Festival Overture) and Tippett's *Ritual Dances* all scrub up well; and while live recordings of Martinů's Divertimento, H173, with Stravinsky's Concerto in D and *Apollon musagète* (the latter with the National Symphony Orchestra Taipei) are exceedingly fine, Bartók's Divertimento on the same CD, a mono transfer, sounds as if it were recorded underwater. Fear not if you have Eloquence's excellent stereo transfer of the Decca version.

A programme of music by Alexander Lokshin (Sir Thomas Allen sings in the Fifth Symphony), all of it worth sampling, held my attention, as did Allen's fine interpretation of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, but a Tokyo recording of Barshai's own full-bodied performing version of Mahler's Tenth is neither as well played nor as well recorded as its Barshai-led German counterpart (Brilliant Classics). A 'Salute to Maestro Barshai' by the NSO String Ensemble ('chamber symphonies' by Borodin, Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, all arranged by Barshai), though well intentioned, is hardly up to the high musical standards set by the rest of the collection – and there's far more of it than I've had room to mention. It is, for the most part, quite unmissable. **Rob Cowan**

THE RECORDING

A Tribute to Rudolf Barshai

ICA Classics ⑧ (20 discs) ICAB5136

Modern mastery

The great Russian pianist **Emil Gilels** left a substantial legacy on Deutsche Grammophon, for which he recorded from 1972 until his death, aged 69, in 1985. A box-set of 24 CDs has been issued that gathers together that legacy to mark the centenary of Gilels's birth this year. It is full of gems as well as one frustration – the planned Beethoven piano sonata series came so close to completion (28 of the numbered 32 – it's missing Nos 1, 9, 22 and 32) and remains one of those tantalising ‘so near yet so fars’. It's still a sizeable body of work and does contain some magnificent performances (the disc of the *Hammerklavier* took a *Gramophone* Award in 1984 and it remains a colossally imposing reading). In a really superb accompanying note, Jeremy Siepmann absolutely puts his finger on this pianist's secrets: ‘One of the cardinal features of Gilels's art, and no accident, was his ability to convey a sense of narrative’, and time and again you feel you're in presence of a master storyteller – the gradual build-up of tension, the occasional moment of levity, the sadness and then the intensity. It's all here. Siepmann picks out the ‘unfurling of a simple arpeggio’ in Op 2 No 2 and he's absolutely right – Gilels is masterly in such deceptively ‘simple’ writing.

I read once that he would sometimes show up for recording sessions in white tie and tails to recreate the concert experience; and while he could be a little wayward live (I heard him a couple of times in Edinburgh and he could be surprisingly approximate), the essence of the music was always there in spades.

The greatest loss in this cycle is the final sonata – what would he have made of it? Well, judging by the other ‘late’ sonatas, I suspect it would have been hugely impressive. Dive into this Beethoven cycle anywhere and you'll find yourself wondering at his command and authority. Richard Osborne put it perfectly when reviewing that *Hammerklavier*: ‘It is, in fine, an absorbing and ambiguous reading. At times it is a model of lucidity, arguments and textures appearing as the mechanism of a fine Swiss watch must do to a craftsman's glass; yet the reading is also full of subversive beauty, the finely elucidated tonal shifts confirming Charles Rosen's assertion that “Beethoven's art, for all its turbulence, is here as sensuous as a Schubert song”.’ Gilels's sound was big, with rarely any lightening of tone for classical fare.

That said, I love the two Mozart piano concertos he recorded in 1973 with the Vienna Philharmonic and Karl Böhm (K595) and with his daughter Elena (K365) – there's enormous charm and play of light and shade here, as there is in collaboration with his daughter in Schubert's F minor Fantasy, the A major Rondo, the *Andantino varié* and six Ecossaises.

There are some classic recordings here: the two Brahms piano concertos with the BPO and Eugen Jochum – masterly readings that sound as if they were hewn from solid granite, although there is great tenderness and poetry in the playing too. Gilels's disc of Grieg *Lyric Pieces* is a sheer delight and shows a different side of this great artist (and, indeed, composer). The finale of Brahms's First Piano Quartet and the Schubert *Trout* (both done with members of the Amadeus Quartet) are wonderfully fleet of foot too.

And then there are the collaborations with other Russian giants: piano trios – Haydn D major and G minor, Beethoven E flat and *Archduke* and Schumann No 1 with Leonid Kogan and Mstislav Rostropovich that enshrine a seemingly lost style of chamber music playing. Fauré's First Piano Quartet, with Kogan, Rostropovich and Barshai – darker and slightly heavier than we're used to today – is terrifically involving. This wonderful set sells for about £50 – worth every penny.

The **Quartetto Italiano** was founded in Siena in 1942 and once established as a full-time ensemble, in 1945, worked together (with only two changes of personnel – there were three viola players) until 1980. They were Philips' ‘house’ quartet from 1965 to 1980 and recorded complete cycles of the Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Webern quartets, but before Philips they had recorded for Decca (with a brief period on American Columbia, obviously not represented here).

The young quartet, initially called the Nuovo Quartetto Italiano, started out by playing everything from memory and the early recordings do have a winning spontaneity and a real sense of vitality. It's interesting to compare the works



they recorded a number of times like the Schubert *Quartettsatz*, taped in 1949, 1965 and 1979, or, for meatier fare, the First *Rasumovsky* (1952 and '73). The playing gains in elegance and lyricism, as well as rhythmic freedom – a long meeting with Wilhelm Furtwängler at the 1951 Salzburg Festival was a watershed in their musical development, and they took his advice to heart and entered a new phase of music-making (at the same time, they stopped performing from memory, partly due to the need to expand their repertoire). In a note that is absolutely mandatory reading, Tully Potter tells the quartet's story and, *en passant*, uses an expression that just nails the Italiano's most treasurable characteristic – their ‘gentle humanity’.

Some people find the Quartetto Italiano's playing too smooth, too lacking in *Sturm und Drang*, too Mediterranean, perhaps. Their Beethoven cycle, for me, is at its greatest in the middle-period quartets: the *Rasumovskys* are simply magnificent. The last four Schubert quartets are really impressive, with the final G major work perfectly balancing muscle and ambition with elegance and lyricism. And their collaboration with Maurizio Pollini in the Brahms Piano Quintet (a *Gramophone* Award winner) is very fine, if a little skewed towards the piano.

Nowadays, it's very easy to sample recordings online, so I'd urge you to do so. A lovely memento of a great ensemble (listed for about £65).

James Jolly

THE RECORDINGS

Emil Gilels The Complete Recordings

on Deutsche Grammophon
DG (24 discs) 479 4651GB24

Quartetto Italiano Complete Decca,
Philips and DG Recordings
Decca (37 discs) 478 8824DC37

Opera



Mark Pullinger surveys some recent DVDs from the Met:

'Netrebko's soprano is now perfectly suited to Verdi's heavier roles; her voluptuous lower register is ravishing' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**



Mike Ashman on a new *Freischütz* from the Semperoper Dresden:

'Thielemann gives full due to Weber's concertante-like wind-writing and to Samiel's black magic' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**

Lima

'Rabbia, furor, dispetto'

Enea in Tracia - Sinfonia. **Teséo** - excerpts.

Lo spirito di contraddizione - Sinfonia.

La vera costanza - Sinfonia

Monika Mauch sop Ensemble Concentus

Peninsulæ / Vasco Negreiros

Paraty (F) PARATY715134 (58' • DDD • T/b)



Jerónimo Francisco de Lima (1741-1822) was sponsored by Joseph I of Portugal to study

for six years in Naples at the Conservatorio di S Onofrio a Capuana. Upon his return to his native Lisbon he composed serenatas and operas for the royal court. The city's opera house had not been rebuilt after the catastrophic earthquake of 1755 but musical entertainments were performed in various palaces, including the court theatre at Salvaterra de Magos (the winter palace where the royal family spent each carnival season).

Vasco Negreiros directs what appears to be the first-ever recording dedicated to Lima's music, which has clear traces of the Neapolitan school (eg Jommelli) and occasional hints of Haydn-esque charisma. The strings of Concentus Peninsulæ can sound acerbic and these performances are sometimes rough and ready, but I enjoyed the bucolic oboes and bassoon contributions to the Sinfonia from *Teséo* (1783). From the same opera, three set pieces for the spiteful sorceress Medea are sung with limpid melodic shaping, tasteful embellishments and theatrical conviction by Monika Mauch; Medea's conflicting feelings of heartbreak and thirst for vengeance are brilliantly captured in the multifaceted accompanied recitative that leads into 'Dall'a speme, dall'amore' (featuring dynamic solo horn flourishes).

Bold fanfares for trumpets and horns set the scene for a military assembly on the beach in the conclusion to the Sinfonia to *Enea in Tracia* (1772), whereas there are witty musical irregularities in the first part

of the Sinfonia to the comedy *Lo spirito di contraddizione* (1781). The libretto's scene description of a ship beset by thunder and lightning during the end of the Sinfonia to *La vera costanza* (1785) offers an opportunity for members of the stage company Antiqua Escena to provide tempestuous sound effects made by replicas of historical stage machines. Albeit lopsided, this programme achieves its primary objective by indicating that Lima's music merits further attention. **David Vickers**

Puccini



La fanciulla del West

Nina Stemme sop Minnie

Jonas Kaufmann ten Dick Johnson

Tomasz Konieczny bass-bar Jack Rance

Norbert Ernst ten Nick

Paolo Rumetz bar Ashby

Boaz Daniel bass-bar Sonora

Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera / Franz Welser-Möst

Stage director Marco Arturo Marelli

Video director Felix Breisach

Sony Classical (F) DVD 88875 06406-9;

(F) BD 88875 06407-9 (138' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)



There have been several other worthwhile DVD releases of *La fanciulla del West* in the past couple of years but nobody is likely to question the unique selling point of this one. Bringing together Nina Stemme and Jonas Kaufmann for the first time as the opera's central couple, and with Kaufmann making his debut as Dick Johnson, the Vienna State Opera knew they had a winner on their hands.

One might expect that the colourful setting of Puccini's Wild West opera would be a gift to any director, but few productions stay true to the composer's intentions. Marco Arturo Marelli's staging in Vienna, new in 2013, is mostly conventional, but updates the action to a gritty working milieu in the present day,

preferring down-to-earth Italian *verismo* to romantic escapism. The first act takes place in a warehouse complex of corrugated iron with the Polka saloon reduced to a caravan selling refreshments. In Act 2, Minnie lives in a mobile home, and the third act takes place at a railway loading bay, though with minutes to go Marelli suddenly relents and sends Minnie and Dick Johnson off to a new life in a multicoloured hot-air balloon – unexpected and bizarre.

The star couple are on top form. Stemme plays Minnie as a tomboy with red-as-rust hair and unflattering blue dungarees. In the early, conversational parts of the role her voice sounds too thickly un-Italianate, but as soon as dramatic power is called for, its cut and thrust really tell. In the theatre Stemme sounded one size larger vocally than Kaufmann but the tenor's burnished tone and romantic magnetism come across impressively on disc. Tomasz Konieczny does well not to be upstaged as a searingly forceful Jack Rance. Paolo Rumetz's Ashby is gruffly sung but Norbert Ernst's trusty Nick and Boaz Daniel's sympathetic Sonora are well in the picture. Alessio Arduini does not appear as Jake Wallace (his song is played through a radio, symbolic of the miners' isolation from the world). Franz Welser-Möst galvanises his forces with drive and aplomb.

The combined strengths of this performance make Sony's DVD a clear first choice among recent releases – less drab than its Stockholm rival on EuroArts, more convincing than Lehnhoff's glitzy, Hollywood production from Amsterdam. How rewarding it is, too, to see the detail in Stemme and Kaufmann's portrayals at close quarters – the look on Kaufmann's face as he lies to Minnie about Nina Micheltorena; her horror as she realises she has been dealt a losing hand in her poker match with Jack Rance. I enjoyed this *Fanciulla del West* enormously on DVD – more, in fact, than in the theatre.

Richard Fairman

Selected comparisons:

Rizzi (12/10) (OPAR) DVD OA1039D; BD OABD7075D

Morandi (11/13) (EURO) DVD 207 2598; BD 207 2594

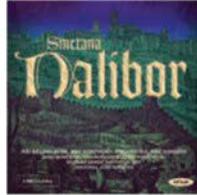
Star couple on top form: Jonas Kaufmann and Nina Stemme in *La fanciulla del West* from the Vienna State Opera

Smetana

Dalibor	
Dana Burešová sop.	Milada
Richard Samek ten.	Dalibor
Ivan Kusnjer bar.	Vladislav
Alžběta Poláčková sop.	Jitka
Jan Stava bass	Beneš
Svatopluk Sem bar	Budíjov
Aleš Voráček ten.	Vítěk
BBC Singers and Symphony Orchestra /	
Jiří Bělohlávek	

Onyx M ② ONYX4158 (146' • DDD • S)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, May 2, 2015



Even if you didn't know a note of Smetana's opera *Dalibor*, you'd be able to identify the composer. The bardic harp solo, the brass fanfares and the carousing soldiers seem to step straight from the orchestral pages of *Má vlast*. The opera is akin to a Czech *Fidelio*. In 15th-century Prague, the knight Dalibor is imprisoned for avenging his friend's death, a minstrel. Milada, his victim's sister, is moved by his

plight and, disguised as a boy, enters the jail to secure his release, falling in love with him. Unlike *Fidelio*, there is no happy ending. The music is endlessly tuneful and is very much a paean to the power of music. Smetana loves a leitmotif and the string theme accompanying the knight Dalibor – remarkably similar to the theme Dvořák later wrote for *Vodník* in *Rusalka* – quickly becomes an earworm.

If there's one conductor you want in this repertoire, it's Jiří Bělohlávek, and for this performance, recorded in concert last May at the Barbican, he assembled some of the finest singers from Prague's National Theatre. Richard Samek is a pleasing Dalibor, not the most heroic tenor, but sweet-toned. Soprano Dana Burešová makes a strong impression as Milada, especially in the Act 2 love duet. Alžběta Poláčková nearly steals the performance as Jitka, the peasant girl who rouses support for Dalibor.

The playing of the BBC Symphony Orchestra is excellent; you'd almost have to pinch yourself to believe that you weren't listening to Bělohlávek's Czech Philharmonic. It's 20 years since Zdeněk Košler's Supraphon recording, so this splendid new one is most welcome.

However, there is a serious blot on Onyx's copybook. The booklet contains a synopsis only. For the libretto, you have to venture online and award yourself bonus points if you can actually locate it on their website. It's eventually to be found in minuscule white font on a grey background. The English text is not placed alongside the Czech, making it next to impossible to follow. I appreciate production costs are high in providing texts in a CD booklet, but in failing to even offer this as a downloadable pdf file, Onyx is serving its customers shabbily.

Mark Pullinger*Selected comparisons:**Košler (12/95) (SUPR) SU0077-2*

Szymanowski

King Roger

Mariusz Kwiecień bar.	Roger II
Georgia Jarman sop.	Roxana
Kim Begley ten.	Edrisi
Saimir Pirgu ten.	Shepherd
Alan Ewing bass	Archbishop
Agnes Zwierko mez.	Deaconess
Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House /	
Sir Antonio Pappano	



GRAMOPHONE Collector

BIG SCREEN TO SMALL SCREEN

Mark Pullinger watches a selection of performances from the Metropolitan Opera in New York, broadcast in cinemas and now released on DVD and Blu-ray



'A gripping portrayal': Anna Netrebko as Lady Macbeth in Verdi's opera, with Željko Lučić as her husband

The Met in HD is now a well-established brand for live cinema screenings, reaching audiences across the globe. This latest clutch of Blu-ray and DVD releases means you don't even have to prise yourself from your armchair and venture out to your local cinema.

Many readers will already be familiar with Robert Carsen's production of **Falstaff**, which was unveiled at the Royal Opera in 2012 and has since travelled to co-producing houses in Milan, Toronto and New York. From Shakespearean England, Carsen shunts the action to the new Elizabethan age of the 1950s, tweeds and scarlet foxhunting jackets replacing doublet and hose. Paul Steinberg's sets are packed with period detail, from the wood-panelled Garter Inn – here a

gentleman's club – to the Fords' 'all mod cons' kitchen, straight out of the pages of *Ideal Home*.

The whole thing is a riot from start to finish, led by the irrepressible Ambrogio

'Andrew Davis keeps Lehár's effervescent score bubbling along nicely'

Maestri – surely the world's leading fat knight – as Sir John. He rolls his tongue around the text as hungrily as he tucks into the roast turkey he carves up during his ditty about being the Duke of Norfolk's page. His baritone is rich and resonant, and he invests the role with humour and touching resignation. Unfortunately, most of the cast don't match their

Royal Opera counterparts, except for the brooding Ford of Franco Vassallo, but the sense of ensemble is lively under James Levine's shrewd direction.

More Shakespeare. A black lacquered set encircled by trees represents the 'blasted heath' in Adrian Noble's production of Verdi's **Macbeth**, where frumpy, cardigan-clad witches swing their handbags in time with the music. Tree trunks close in and chandeliers descend to form the Macbeths' castle. Noble's updating translates the action to a contemporary state that is tearing itself apart. His direction is frequently gripping, aided by two magnificent central performances. Anna Netrebko's darker soprano of recent years is now perfectly suited to Verdi's heavier roles; her voluptuous lower register is ravishing and the voice has grown in size

so it fills the Met's cavernous auditorium (I also saw this performance in New York). Dramatically, Netrebko gives a gripping portrayal, topped by a mesmeric sleepwalking scene, walking atop an aisle of chairs.

While many flocked to the Met for Netrebko's Lady, it was a performance matched by Željko Lučić's Macbeth. His velvety timbre and stylish phrasing mark him out as one of the few Verdi baritones today worthy of the description. René Pape and Joseph Calleja are luxury casting as Banco and Macduff, both in beautiful voice, while Fabio Luisi revels in the score's dark *tinta*, conducting an urgent, pacy performance. Highly recommended.

We stay in Scotland – and a more traditional 'blasted heath' – for Rossini's *La donna del lago*. Minimalism is the order of the day in Paul Curran's production, which places us in the 16th century as the Highlanders rebel against King James (Giacomo V). Under the shadow of disguise, the king falls for Elena, the daughter of the rebel leader Douglas. We have a heath, of sorts, populated by a few sprigs of heather, but no sight of Loch Katrine, the sets dominated instead by glowering skies. Elena is courted by three men, who are often in bitter dispute – the disguised monarch, Rodrigo (her father's choice) and Malcolm, a trouser (kilt?) role.

The central trio of Joyce DiDonato (Elena), Juan Diego Flórez (Giacomo) and Daniela Barcellona (Malcolm) are completely inside their roles, as one would expect considering they'd starred in Paris, La Scala and London productions in recent years. DiDonato's technique is scintillating in the opera's rondo finale, where pyrotechnics are ignited. However, taking on this soprano role does expose a certain blandness of tone at the top. The steely brilliance of Flórez's tenor excites, with just a hint of high notes sounding pinched. Michele Mariotti conducts with *bel canto* grace and assurance.

For sumptuously costumed, traditionally picturesque opera productions, you don't need to look much further than Otto Schenk's staging of Dvořák's *Rusalka*. He doesn't probe the darker side of the plot too deeply, such as the murky realms of nightmare explored in Martin Kušej's compelling, disturbing Munich production (which I cannot imagine going down too well at the Met). But there's something very satisfying about the fairy-tale beauty of Schenk's woodland setting, all mossy banks and glittering water, and his two leads –

Renée Fleming and Piotr Beczała – are certainly more comfortable in traditional productions. This is a favourite Fleming role and it is sung very beautifully, her creamy tone with silvery top notes still exquisite. Beczała is in heroic voice and throws in some gorgeous head notes in his death throes. Their 'acting by numbers' approach may fail to move, but their singing certainly does. Yannick Nézet-Séguin is alert to the score's Czech dance rhythms and wallows in Dvořák's rich orchestration.

Fleming is also the central star in Susan Stroman's new production of *The Merry Widow*. Jeremy Sams's witty English translation helps the audience keep up with the fast-paced intrigues as Baron Zeta (the redoubtable Thomas Allen) attempts to keep Hanna Glawari's fortune within Pontevedro's economy, hoping to pair her up with the high-living Count Danilo.

Andrew Davis keeps Lehár's effervescent score bubbling along nicely and this would be the perfect, light-hearted operatic fare to see in the New Year...as indeed it did in New York, the production's gala opening taking place on December 31, 2014. There's a great sense of fun running through the entire cast. Fleming's Hanna Glawari is glamorously over the top, as is Nathan Gunn's Danilo, revelling in his wild life of drinking, gambling and grisettes at Chez Maxim's.

Cinema-goers will be familiar with the starry intros and backstage interviews included here, often as bonus material which, once seen, needn't be revisited, although I'd have made an exception if Ambrogio Maestri, interviewed by Fleming in the Fords' kitchen just as he'd rustled up a Verdian risotto, had given a cookery demonstration. G

THE RECORDINGS

Verdi Falstaff Levine

Decca (P) DVD 074 3891DH;
(B) 074 3893DH

Verdi Macbeth Luisi

DG (P) DVD 073 5222GH2;
(B) 073 5234GH

Rossini La donna del lago Mariotti

Erato (P) DVD 2564 60509-8;
(B) 2564 60469-9

Dvořák Rusalka Nézet-Séguin

Decca (P) DVD 074 3873DH;
(B) 074 3874DH

Lehár The Merry Widow A Davis

Decca (P) DVD 074 3900DH;
(B) 074 3901DH

Stage director Kasper Holten

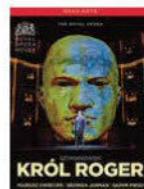
Video director Ian Russell

Opus Arte (P) DVD OA1161D; (B) OABD7162D
(88' + 17' • NTSC • 16.9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,
DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/S)

Bonuses include Director's Commentary,

Introduction to King Roger and Cast Gallery

Recorded live, May 12 & 16, 2015



Kasper Holten's first two stagings for the Royal Opera were, respectively, afflicted by too much emphasis on cerebral concept and too much emphasis on visual effects. That his third show at Covent Garden – the company's first production of Szymborski's 1926 opera – came good is paradoxically because concept and design loom larger than ever. Yet both work together to embrace the tensions of the Polish composer's evocative score.

As seen in the theatre in May 2015, the idée fixe of this show – an enormous sculpted head designed by Steffen Ararfing – understandably monopolised one's attention. The effect of this giant bonce is different as captured on Opus Arte's Blu-ray/DVD. The *coup de théâtre* is less arresting, but through more (filmed) focus on Mariusz Kwiecień's performance in the title-role and the society he spars against, Holten's dramaturgical thinking also comes into sharper relief.

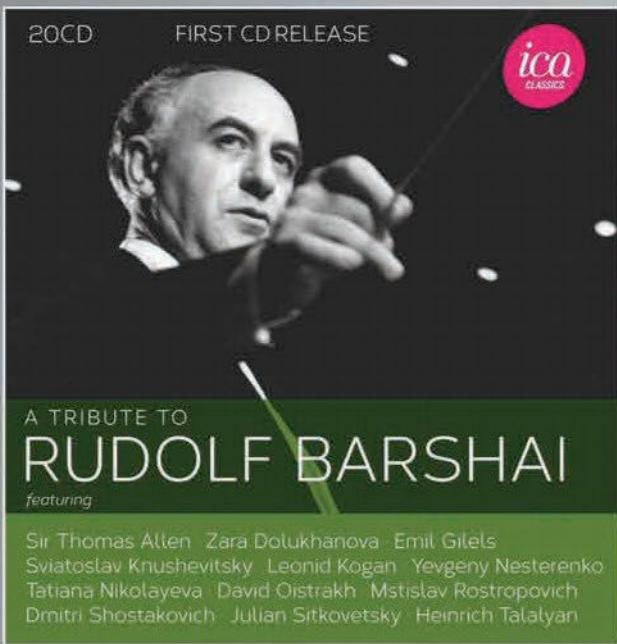
This King Roger begins as the lionised symbol of religious and state power but by the end of the opera he is a more powerful man despite having lost his ability to command either office. If most interpretations of Szymborski's work dwell on the composer's sexuality, equating the Shepherd who disrupts Roger's court and his mind with repressed desire, Holten has other ideas: liberation comes not from following Saimir Pirgu's grinning prophet in his golden frock-coat but from understanding your own mind. So, enter the enormous head, with its intellect tucked behind the eyes in the form of a library, and its libido – some naked men in beige pants – crawling around the basement in Cathy Marston's suitably twitchy choreography.

True, it's not dazzlingly subtle. Nor is Szymborski's music, however, captured here by Antonio Pappano with superb attention to both the iridescent orchestration and – more tricky this – its theatrical energy. The orchestra play with silky finesse and the chorus are on especially dazzling form for the intoxicating climaxes. I'm not a fan of director's commentaries on DVDs at the best of times, and it's certainly no way to watch an

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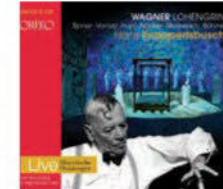


Third time lucky for Kasper Holten at Covent Garden: his production of Szymanowski's King Roger, now available on Opus Arte DVD and Blu-ray

opera. Yet dipping into the extra feature on this release, in which Holten and Pappano discuss the work while it's performed, is rewarding: the two clearly strove to realise each other's priorities as well as their own.

The performances are all first-rate, Kwiecień and Pirgu matching each other in endurance and vocal beauty, Georgia Jarman's Queen Roxana tender and supple in her Act 2 siren song and Kim Begley's Edrisi as firm a voice of reason as Szymanowski permits in an opera that's always heated to boiling point. Ian Russell's film direction only loses its way when he permits a sort of 'orgy-cam', filmed from somewhere inside Roger's head as those buff chaps living inside his mind bump and grind against Jarman. She looks, on closer inspection, rather unimpressed. **Neil Fisher**

Wagner



To date

Knappertsbusch has been represented in *Lohengrin* only

sporadically on disc. This new discovery still provides a late throw of the dice for the sort of 'heavy' interpretation of earlier Wagner that had already been abandoned at the Festspielhaus. A Siegfried (Hopf) and a Brünnhilde (Bjoner) take leading roles, and there is a *Götterdämmerung*-like weight in the fanfares and processional music.

Unhappily, however, the basic sound of this preservation is poor – an unresonant and tubby brass timbre and relatively overloud timpani. Voices placed upstage centre – Lohengrin on first arrival and Ortrud interrupting the Act 2 procession – sound as if they're especially amplified or treated, perhaps due to unfortunate microphone placing. The accidents in ensemble, especially in the tricky layering of Act 1's 'Seht! Seht! Welch' ein seltsam Wunder', make this feel finally like that unrehearsed Knappertsbusch performance of legend.

There are rewards: the rare chance of hearing the Norwegian Ingrid Bjoner on disc complete in a major role. Her 'big'

career in Wagner, Strauss and Verdi coincided unfortunately with that of Birgit Nilsson, although Bjoner, mostly denied Bayreuth, was able to make Munich her home base for new productions. If you compare her with today's Elsas of choice (for example, Annette Dasch), you may find her over-regal and matronly but Bjoner is clear and good in the role's sorrow and frustration, especially moving in Act 3 when she can't call her husband by name.

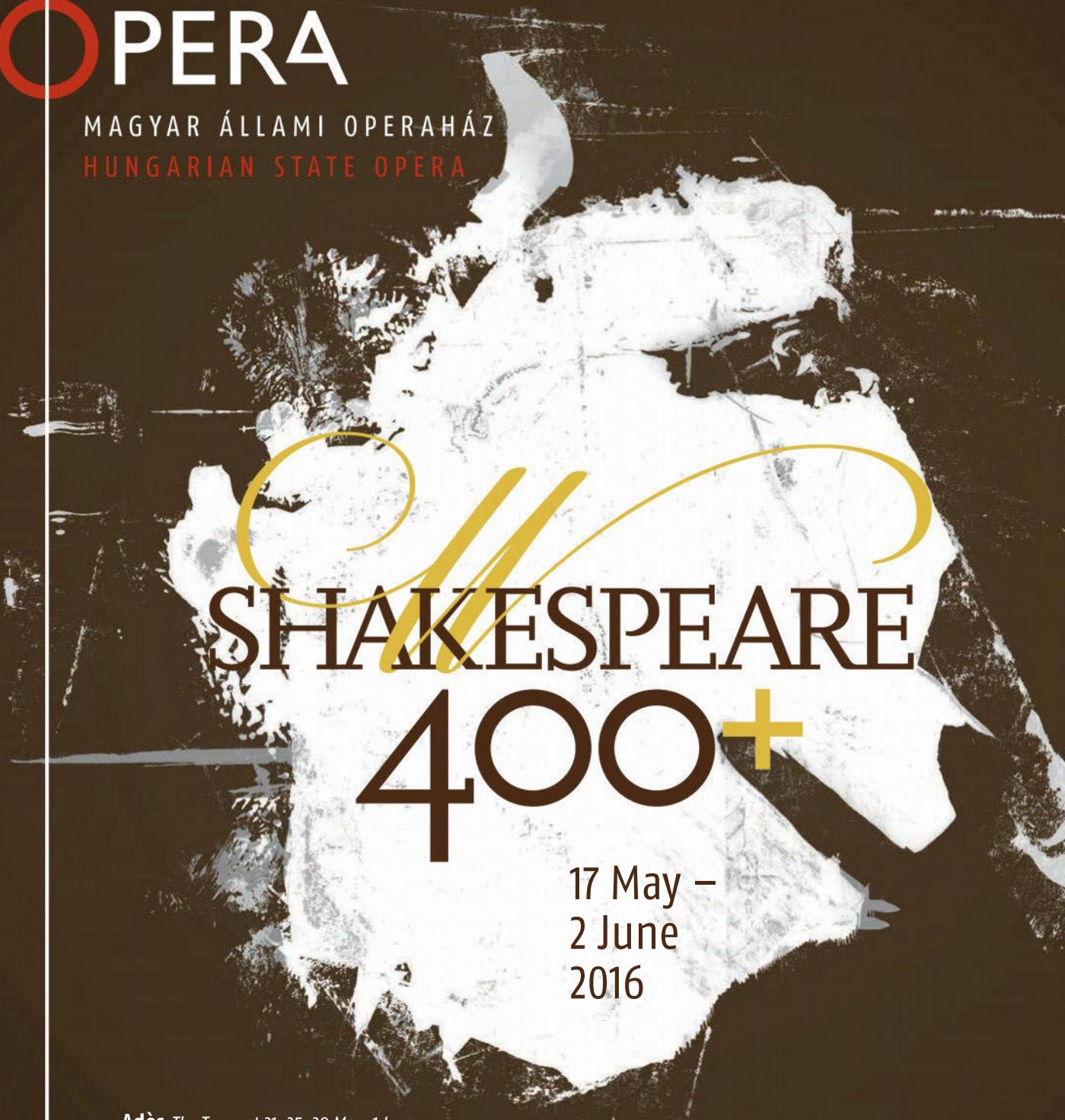
After a bumpy start to the evening, Knappertsbusch, like Kempe, establishes a firm grip on the through-line of the often disparate Act 2 and does not stint on the melodramatic excitements of Act 3. Hopf has genuinely musical power but rarely finds outside 'In fernem Land' the emotion and colour of Melchior. Nöcker gives us Telramund as pure baddie rather than a case study in psychological confusion. Varnay is (just) starting to sound her age but remains an unfailingly stylish and spooky reader of Ortrud's character. King and Herald are strong, straight and no-nonsense.

There are a number of cheaper historic *Lohengrins* ranging from Melchior with Fritz Busch or Leinsdorf at the Met via the early New Bayreuth experiments of Keilberth, von Matačić and Sawallisch to the also recently unearthed 'new' mid-'60s

Hans Hopf	ten	Lohengrin
Ingrid Bjoner	sop	Elsa
Astrid Varnay	mez.	Ortrud
Hans Günter Nöcker	bar	Telramund
Kurt Böhme	bass	King Henry
Josef Metternich	bar	Herald
Chorus of the Bavarian State Opera; Bavarian State Orchestra / Hans Knappertsbusch		
Orfeo	③ C900 153D (3h 28' • ADD)	
Recorded live, September 2, 1963		

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'Deserves a clear place among current small-screen versions': Sasha Waltz's production of *Tannhäuser* from Berlin

Karl Böhm. I would not rank this uneven release above any of those as a performance to live with; but if you love this opera and are interested in the development of performing Wagner, you need to hear this set. **Mike Ashman**

Wagner



Tannhäuser

Peter Seiffert ten *Tannhäuser*

Ann Petersen sop Elisabeth

Peter Mattei bar Wolfram

Marina Prudenskaya mez Venus

René Pape bass Hermann

Peter Sonn ten Walther

Berlin State Opera Chorus; Berlin Staatskapelle /

Daniel Barenboim

Stage director **Sasha Waltz**

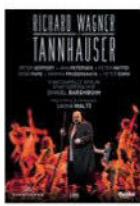
Video director **Vincent Bataillon**

Bel Air Classiques F © BAC122;

F © BAC422 (3h 12' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live, April 2014



Even a frustrated ballerina lover from the 1861 Jockey Club that disrupted the premiere of Wagner's new Paris *Tannhäuser* might point to an adequate sufficiency of dance, had this been the stage production on offer. Sasha Waltz – 'stage

direction and choreography' – regularly introduces choreographed movement in all three acts. Although the costumes are updated to a kind of Hollywood-ised 1950s Europe, the staging feels like that of a 19th-century 'grand' opera where ensemble scenes were organised by a ballet master, stage manager or one of the soloists, and the principals were briefed but left largely free.

Only once, in the huge, repetitive and difficult ensemble that rounds off Act 2, does the presence of dancers, and movement representing stress, guilt then repentance, feel like a *faute de mieux* substitute for more dramaturgical intervention. Elsewhere the Venusberg scene (Paris version, although what follows is all Dresden), with the corps de ballet present and moving the whole time in a suspended eyeball moon of a set, is delightfully slinky and sexy (Prudenskaya's Venus ditto). The Entry of the Guests in Act 2 is a watchable mix of dance and ballet-walking, while the staged Prelude to Act 3 is a stylised pilgrimage to Rome. Most striking of all (apologies for the spoiler) is the finale's shoulder-high carry-on of Elisabeth's body just as the Venusberg dancers are dragging away their own rejected goddess – an idea Wagner himself tried in Dresden but was talked out of.

Musically, here is work from the conductor and orchestra on the level of their

2013 London Proms *Ring*, Barenboim continuing to hold Wagner especially in focus, a step forwards in style and balance from his uneven 2001 studio recording (Warner Classics, 5/02, with the same *Tannhäuser*, Landgraf, chorus and orchestra). Following a Bacchanale not far short in propulsion of Toscanini's fire, Barenboim finds tempi and balance in his accompaniments that never swamp this essentially 1840s scoring with excessive Romantic modern-instrument sonorities (compare Solti or Karajan). A well-chosen cast make much of the sympathetic acoustic of the Staatsoper's temporary Schiller Theater home, with the ladies well contrasted (an Isolde-like Elisabeth, a Venus with good low notes), Peter Mattei's finely enunciated Wolfram and Peter Seiffert encompassing the title-role's difficulties with a constant eye on their dramatic import.

By virtue of its grand-opera presentation in movement and its musical achievements, this Berlin *Tannhäuser* deserves a clear place among current small-screen versions, an intriguing contrast to the more interpreted productions of David Alden (Munich/Zubin Mehta) and Götz Friedrich (Bayreuth/Colin Davis). **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

C Davis (5/09) (DG) 073 4446GH2

Mehta (ARTH) PWP 100 014 or 109 153; E 109 154

Strong musical values in *Der Freischütz* from Dresden, conducted by Christian Thielemann**Weber****Der Freischütz**

Sara Jakubiak sop	Agathe
Michael König ten	Max
Christina Landshamer sop	Aennchen
Georg Zeppenfeld bass	Caspar
Adrian Eröd bar	Ottokar
Andreas Bauer bass	Hermit
Albert Dohmen bass-bar	Cuno
Sebastian Wartig bar	Kilian
Dresden State Opera Chorus; Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann	
Stage director Axel Köhler	
Video director Tiziano Mancini	
C Major Entertainment	DVD 733108; Blu-ray 733204 (149' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)
Recorded live, April 29 – May 3, 2015	



Although this is a far from 'historical'-sounding performance, Christian Thielemann's gives full due to Weber's *concertante*-like wind-writing and to the dissonances of Samiel's black magic. Also, while assigning no less weight to the musical 'good' side of the story (the Hermit's Act 3 intervention and

the finale's celebration to the big tune first heard in the Overture), the conductor never overpowers Weber's writings. This is supple, carefully sifted music-making, beautifully paced.

Onstage is a unit set, replete with overconvenient staircases. Everywhere is dirt and destruction, so perhaps it's intended (as seen in the men's dull donkey jackets and the women's folkish dirndls) to evoke post-1945 Dresden. A first-floor Cuno's lodge splits bizarrely at Max's exit from the 'Wie? Was? Entsetzen!' Trio.

The stage production follows the libretto apart from one messily realised idea. While Samiel is represented only by an amplified voice in the Wolf's Glen, other times that he is invoked by Caspar are illustrated by an early appearance of the Hermit or a tiresome inn waitress with a limp (at Caspar's death she is cast out like an evil witch). The show's other attempts at Grand Guignol can manage only a comically large and heavy eagle crashing down after the first 'free' shot and, for atmosphere in the Wolf's Glen, hanging corpses (again suggesting the last war?) and lightning flashes. The start of Act 3 is rearranged – all the Agathe at home scenes first then all the trial shot business with Ottokar and the Hermit.

The vocal casting is as precise and well calculated as the overall musical approach but the production seems too nervous of the work itself to give the singers anything dynamic to do. Both Michael König (also the Max of 2013's big screen version of the opera, *Hunter's Bride* – ArtHaus, 11/13) and the American soprano Sara Jakubiak (Agathe) are convincing presences and have voices ideally placed between the lyrical and the more heroic. Georg Zeppenfeld enjoys himself as rough melodramatic baddie rather than his habitual upright noble. Christina Landshamer encompasses Aennchen with warm sympathy and good top notes, although her jokes lie essentially unstaged. Adrian Eröd has a camp time as a bored Ottokar who cynically accepts the Hermit's rulings while arranging for a child marksman at the end to suggest the trial shot tradition may not be over.

The only *Freischütz* on the small screen that is unmissable remains the anarchic send-up by Achim Freyer (NVC Arts/Warner). The musical side of the present release demands to be heard, however.

Mike Ashman

Selected comparison:

DR Davies (NVC) 5050467 3524-2-1

Zandonai

Francesca da Rimini

Christina Vasileva	sop.....	Francesca
Martin Mühlé	ten.....	Paolo il Bello
Juan Orozco	bar.....	Gianciotto
Adriano Graziani	ten.....	Malatestino
Kim-Lillian Strelbel	sop.....	Garsenda
Bénédicte Tauran	sop.....	Biancofiore
Sally Wilson	mez.....	Adonella
Marija Jokovic	mez.....	Altichiera
Viktória Mester	mez.....	Samaritana/Smaragdi
Levente Molnár	bar.....	Torrigiano/Ostasio
Freiburg Chamber Choir; Opera and Extra Chorus of Theater Freiburg; Vocal Ensemble of the Freiburg Hochschule für Musik; Freiburg Philharmonic Orchestra / Fabrice Bollon	CPO F ② CPO777 960-2 (133' • DDD • S/T/t)	



The only work of Riccardo Zandonai's to maintain a toehold in the repertory,

Francesca da Rimini is one of the more interesting of the post-*verismo* Italian operas that, composed on the eve of the First World War, quickly did the international rounds before sinking into obscurity. A lavish production at the New York Met staged for Scotto and Domingo in the 1980s was very much against the run of play – at least outside of Italy – although it was filmed (and is available on DVD) and revived, with a new cast obviously, in 2013, with the HD broadcast further helping *Francesca*'s cause.

On disc the work has not fared terribly well. Alongside the usual live releases, including a recent Bregenz recording conducted by Fabio Luisi (Koch – nla), from the studio there have been only Decca highlights from Magda Olivero and Mario del Monaco, an early Cetra set (in scrawny sound, starring Maria Caniglia and Giacinto Prandelli), and an RCA set from the 1980s (with better but still with slightly raw, voice-heavy engineering), starring Raina Kabaivanska and William Matteuzzi under Maurizio Arena.

This new CPO set, the first, as far as I'm aware, to present the score uncut, fills an important gap, giving us a well-engineered modern account of the work and including, as seems now happily to be the company's default, both libretto and translation. But it's also an excellent achievement on its own terms. The cast features singers largely active in Germany in general and at Theater Freiburg in particular, and they sing powerfully, reliably and impressively. Christina Vasileva's soprano is up to the challenge of Francesca. It's a rich, complex voice, a touch soft-edged where Kabaivanska's becomes strident, and she

makes some luxurious sounds, even if those sounds thin out a little at the top; she admittedly doesn't do what she might with the words, but the characterisation, though generalised, is nevertheless convincing.

Martin Mühlé as her lover Paolo is rock solid, the voice occasionally reminiscent of del Monaco – and the slightly stentorian delivery, too. But he delivers a fine, handsome and robust performance. Juan Orozco sings with suitably unstinting menace as Gianciotto (Paolo's lame brother) and Adriano Graziani with threatening, insinuating bite as Malatestino (the one with one eye), and there's not a weak link among the rest of the quite large cast, with Viktória Mester's rich-voiced Smaragdi especially fine. (It should be noted that CPO's booklet could be clearer regarding the characters, with some confusion between libretto and cast list).

Fabrice Bollon conducts the score with a sure touch and is particularly adept at bringing out its moments of beauty – some of them, such as the dreamy orchestral and choral postlude to the first act, offering a breathtaking mixture of Wagnerian atmosphere and, with Zandonai's onstage use of a plangent viola pomposa and lute, neo-Renaissance colour. When reviewing the earlier RCA set, Michael Oliver noted that the work pits such ravishing moments against those of unappealing brutality. That dichotomy is still apparent here, and Bollon can't hide some of the score's more galumphing, militaristic character, but under his direction it feels less jarring, with both the orchestral playing and CPO's engineering – still voice-orientated but not overbearingly so, and well-blended – offering real refinement.

The piece therefore comes across as more sophisticated and economical than elsewhere, an escape into the heightened psychological reality and symbolism of Gabriele D'Annunzio, on whose play *Tito Ricordi*'s libretto was based. And while there are explicit references to the story of Tristan and Isolde in the text, the score has more of the heavy fatalism and occasional brutality of *Götterdämmerung* and often also brings *Gurrelieder* to mind (although Schoenberg's work was premiered only a year before Zandonai's). Francesca's final scene, meanwhile, shares a beautiful calm-before-the-storm colour with Desdemona's (although, of course, Verdi's heroine is somewhat more blameless).

It's a fascinating and seductive work, then, and one that finally receives the advocacy it deserves with this excellent recording. Do give it a go. **Hugo Shirley**
Selected comparison:

Arena (7/88) (RCA) RD71456

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Gurrelieder in Bergen

Chandos have been on hand to record at two performances of Schoenberg's vast early cantata given in the Norwegian city's Grieghallen, marking both a climax of the **Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra**'s 250th-anniversary celebrations and the arrival of **Edward Gardner** (pictured) as its Chief Conductor. The cast was headed by soloists **Alwyn Mellor** as Tove, **Stuart Skelton** as Waldemaar, **Anna Larsson** as the Wood Dove, and **Thomas Allen** as the Speaker, and the massed choral and instrumental forces of over 300 included a chorus from the **Royal Northern College of Music**.



• Naxos Stanford

The budget label has recorded a disc of Stanford's *Stabat Mater*, *Rise Again* and *Song to the Soul* in Bournemouth with David Hill conducting the **Bach Choir**, the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** and soloists **Elizabeth Cragg**, **Catherine Hopper**, **Robert Murray** and **David Soar**.

• NMC portraits

The new music specialist has finished recording a brace of discs profiling major contemporary composers. The **Hallé Orchestra** under **Nicholas Collon** feature in works by Simon Holt, including the violin concerto *Witness to a snow miracle* with soloist **Chloë Hanslip**, *Syrensong* and *St Vitus in the Kettle*. The disc will be released next year. An album of music by Errrollyn Wallen, including the Cello Concerto, *Hunger* and *Photography* and featuring **Ensemble X**, the **Continuum Ensemble** and cellist **Matthew Sharp**, will be released in March.

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REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Carl Nielsen: a local celebration

A 30-disc set of historical recordings celebrates Denmark's national composer in his 150th-birthday year

It's always dangerous to align the music of a specific nation with local interpreters, as if they and they alone hold the key to authentic performance. Sibelius, for example, has fared especially well here in the UK, as well as in America, Germany and Russia. But when it comes to **Carl Nielsen** I can never quite escape the notion that such sterling past masters as the conductors Launy Grøndahl, Thomas Jensen and Erik Tuxen (who was also a dab hand in jazz) 'released the spirit' more securely than most of their rivals outside of Denmark. Something subliminal registers in their bracing style, their basic honesty in guiding the notes while refusing to fuss yet at the same time generating maximum intensity that, in their hands, makes Nielsen the musical equivalent of a vigorous walking companion on a crisp, windswept day.

Such Danish past masters 'released the spirit' more securely than their rivals

This wonderful set is in effect a gathering of live material that Danacord has, for the most part, already released in a number of box-sets together with commercial recordings from Decca, HMV, Philips and Tono, the master plan of the late Lyndon Jenkins, a self-confessed 'record man' who certainly knew his Nielsen. All the symphonies are represented more than once – the Fifth five times, three of the performances under Tuxen's baton and one, from the Paris Champs-Elysées Theatre in April 1955, being new to me and possibly Tuxen's best, as strong and persuasive a statement of the score as I've heard in years. Performances of the *Inextinguishable* under Jensen (live) and Grøndahl (studio) both show respect for the score and push for maximum drama without overdoing the rhetoric. There

are also the pre-war radio recordings that sound as if the music is being revealed for the first time (it probably was for many contemporary listeners): an impressive albeit fragmented *Espansiva* extracted from Nielsen's memorial concert on October 19, 1931 (the composer had died just two weeks earlier), and a Fifth that I've always thought of as 'the Furtwängler performance that Furtwängler himself never conducted' given under Georg Høeberg in 1933 – expansive, intense, humbling and ultimately triumphant.

Also well worth visiting is a performance of *The Four Temperaments* (Symphony No 2) taken from Grøndhal's farewell concert in June 1956. A symphonic 'supplement' is offered by way of a muscular, tough-grained symphony cycle of sorts (the Fifth seems not to have been recorded but we do at least get a second Sixth) with the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic conducted by Thor Mann, previously released as part of a four-CD set that also includes a superb performance – and fine recording – of the opera *Saul and David*. That too is here, as is an equally compelling complete *Maskarade* under Jensen. Various shorter orchestral works (including attractive incidental music) are also included, all of them in memorable performances.

Other symphonic recordings are virtually as impressive, and then there are the concertos: Yehudi Menuhin is effortful but heartfelt in the Violin Concerto under Mogens Wöldike, while the sweeter-toned Emil Telmányi – Nielsen's son-in-law, also heard in the violin sonatas – sounds rather more natural, whether under Egisto Tango or Fritz Busch. (Busch also offers an imposing sunrise as part of the wonderful *Helios* Overture, another work represented in multiple versions.) Recordings of the Clarinet Concerto with Louis Cahuzac and Ib Eriksson (two performances by the latter) are included,

together with the Flute Concerto (soloist Paul Birkeland).

Among the most impressive – and most historically important – studio recordings are the Prelude and Theme with Variations and the Prelude and Presto for solo violin, both marvellously played by Kai Laursen (whose recording of the Nielsen Concerto was included in a mammoth collection of 26 Danish violin concertos put out by Danacord in 1997 – DACOCD461/70). The Wind Quintet of 1922 is played on a 'creator' recording by the group it was written for, the Copenhagen Wind Quintet (known on the records from 1936 as the Royal Danish Wind Quintet with one change of personnel), and we're offered, among various instrumental and chamber works, the four string quartets, all very well played: Nos 1, 2 and 4 by the Koppel Quartet, No 3 by the Ehring Bloch Quartet. Of the choral and vocal compositions featured, we're given an abridged *Hymnus amoris* under Tango but no *Springtime in Funen*, which is a pity. However, we do have the work's most beautiful song, 'Den milde dag er lys og lang' (The gentle day is bright and long), unforgettable sung by that seraphic-sounding tenor Aksel Schiøtz – two versions as it happens, one with orchestra, the other with piano. It's part of a disc-long Schiøtz-Nielsen song programme, one of the set's many highlights which at a single stretch seems to encapsulate the warmth and freshness of this most original and endearing of 20th century composers. I'd call this a set to cherish, and the transfers, whether from shellac, vinyl or tape, are excellent.

THE RECORDING



Nielsen On Record: Vintage and Other Historical Recordings
Various artists
Danacord ® (30 discs)
DACOCD801/30



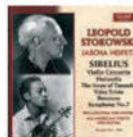
Jascha Heifetz practising in 1934

Heifetz in Philadelphia

A notable CD that serves as a footnote to the Sibelius anniversary celebrations arrives courtesy of Guild, which has granted wider circulation – in reasonable sound – to a recording of Sibelius's Violin Concerto that **Jascha Heifetz** and Leopold Stokowski made in Philadelphia in 1934, reissued here as part of an all-Sibelius programme under Stokowski's direction. Previously released in the context of a big CD collection put out by the orchestra itself, it remained unissued until that first CD incarnation. Why? Well, the combination of Stokowski's dark-hued, brooding romanticism and Heifetz's bright, intensely focused solo playing suggests a poorly arranged marriage. And the recorded balance, although passable, is hardly ideal, with the solo viola in the first movement far too prominent. Heifetz sounds happier with Beecham's leaner accompaniment on his 1935 HMV recording (revived by Warner as part of an all-Sibelius historic collection – 12/15). The rest of Guild's programme tells a happier tale, though I'm not entirely convinced by Stokowski's 1940 All-American Youth Orchestra account of the Seventh Symphony which, for all its elemental episodes, fails to match the mounting sense of inevitability that distinguishes the great Koussevitzky/BBC SO live version that's in the same Warner box that also includes the Heifetz/Beecham Concerto. *Finlandia* (with a truncated ending) and *The Swan of Tuonela* are in a different class but even there I wouldn't swap them for the wonderful stereo recordings that Stokowski made with his own Symphony Orchestra and which are

now out as part of an Icon collection. Flawed or not as an overall production, Heifetz's playing of the Concerto is fabulous.

THE RECORDING



Sibelius Violin Concerto, etc
Heifetz; Philadelphia
Orch / Stokowski
Guild ® GHCD2428

Grumiaux in Salzburg

I think it fair to say that when you compare Heifetz's live and studio recordings, the differences between the two are fairly minimal. But listen to **Arthur Grumiaux** recorded at the Salzburg Festival in July 1961 in partnership with his favoured pianist-collaborator István Hajdu and the urbane but consistently musical Belgian takes on an added dimension, at least in performance terms. In Debussy's Sonata, for example, the extra pace, added tension, colour and inflectional variety all leave an impression that's subtly different to the studio recording. And in Beethoven's First Sonata, fine as the legendary recording with Clara Haskil is, this collaboration with Hajdu finds Grumiaux breathing his lines that much more freely. How tender the opening of Brahms's First Sonata and the duo's poignant handling of the gently rolling cadences at 6'05" into the second movement, Grumiaux employing just a hint of *portamento*. Stravinsky's Divertimento recalls the blend of restraint and heartfelt engagement on Grumiaux's recording of Stravinsky's Concerto, the playing here both warm and where appropriate extremely

lively. Spiky, capricious, mischievous, almost *Petrushka*-like in places, Grumiaux not only plays the music but plays *with* it, and Hajdu is again a superlatively accomplished collaborator. The programme concludes with a seductive account of Ravel's *Pièce en forme de Habanera*. Truly a Grumiaux classic.

THE RECORDING

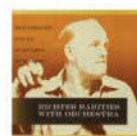


Beethoven, Debussy, et al
Wks for Vn & Pf
Grumiaux, Hajdu
Orfeo ® C912 151B

Rare Richter

Ahead of a massive 50-CD set of **Sviatoslav Richter** rarities en route from Melodiya, a Parnassus CD of 'Richter Rarities with Orchestra' is less rare than you might at first suspect, given that all of the programme is available piecemeal elsewhere, but it's still good to have. It opens with a clipped, forceful rendition of Beethoven's B flat Rondo, WoO6, under Kyrill Kondrashin, before the reptilian murmurings of Ravel's Concerto for the Left Hand herald a performance that's both boldly defiant and coolly controlled. Riccardo Muti cues an imposing account of the orchestral score where the central march has a notably fierce edge to it (the rather harsh sound underlines the effect), whereas the closing cadenza suggests hard-won triumph in the face of adversity. In Richter's first performance of Scriabin's *Prometheus* (April 1972 and the only stereo item on the disc), aside from one or two balancing issues – overly close brass and a chorus that's tucked well into the overall texture – the sound is pretty impressive, Richter given panoramic prominence, his angry interpolations as unstintingly demonic as any I've heard in the last 50 years. Evgeni Svetlanov has the full measure of the piece and you'd have to reach back in time to Alexander Goldenweiser and Nikolai Golovanov (1947, Archipel) to find a performance that burns anywhere near as brightly, and then only in pretty ropy sound. Last comes Strauss's madcap *Burleske* with George Georgescu conducting (September 1961), a combative dialogue reasonably well recorded, though the piano sounds a little worse for wear.

THE RECORDING



Beethoven, Ravel, Scriabin.
Strauss Wks for Pf & Orch
Richter
Parnassus ® 96056

Books



David Gutman reviews a new biography of Stravinsky:
'Cross is unconvinced that Stravinsky's public espousal of everything chic would have extended to bisexuality'



Pianist Peter Donohoe reads the memoirs of Dame Fanny Waterman:
'She has done more to promote the piano and young pianists – particularly in the UK – than any other single person'

Igor Stravinsky

By Jonathan Cross

Reaktion Books, 208pp, PB, £11.99

ISBN 978-1-78023-494-6



Jonathan Cross creates a literary masterpiece in his quest for the "real" Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky.'

So shrills the back-cover blurb of this otherwise sensible, anti-hagiographical 'critical life'. Was the acclamation intended to deflect attention from the absence of an index? You can take in the essentials of this elegant, often resonant study at one or two sittings but its utility as a reference tool is fatally compromised. There are 11 numbered chapters, mainly though not exclusively chronological (*Agon* is transplanted to an earlier chapter devoted to the creative partnership with Balanchine), 30 illustrations neatly incorporated into the body text, full references and brief 'ographies.

The book nevertheless feels stingier than, say, David Matthews's 182-page *Britten* in the similarly conceived Life & Times series from Haus Publishing. While Cross acknowledges his starry collegial helpers, including the scholar responsible for the aforementioned encomium, some basic editorial input might have been more helpful. Cross knows his slippery subject very well indeed. A refreshingly candid indictment of Stravinsky the man on page 14 skewers 'the philandering, the avarice, the anti-Semitism, the snobbery, the narcissism, the cruelty, the hypochondria, the vulnerability...' It's just unfortunate that much the same charge sheet appears on page 168 in the context of an extended discussion of the *Cantata*: 'add[ing] anti-Semitism to his catalogue of repellent character defects that included meanness, cruelty, spitefulness, arrogance, philandering, lying and money-grubbing.' Stravinsky's nanny is mourned twice, 50 pages apart.

We start with a Preface in which the manufacture of tradition and Stravinsky's personal capacity for reinvention come together in the image of the nested wooden dolls or *matryoshki*, themselves a largely 20th-century phenomenon. In a Postlude, the author attends Valery Gergiev's centennial *Rite of Spring* marathon at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées, a Mariinsky evening given a little more historical significance than it can sustain. A few key works are selected for in-depth discussion. Music examples are eschewed yet odd pockets of inscrutable terminology endure, as when Cross sets out to elucidate the harmony of *Les noces* by reference to 'anhemitonic' scale forms.

With 20th-century music no longer seen to pivot quite so crucially on the axis of competing modernisms, there is a chance that we will eventually enjoy Stravinsky's music for what it is rather than for what the composer and his propagandists wanted it to represent. Meanwhile the dissembling reaches its apogee with the arrival of the late Robert Craft – groupie, aide, amanuensis, biographer, friend and ersatz family member. Craft earns points for rejuvenating Stravinsky's creativity at a time when, worn out by the exertions of *The Rake's Progress*, he saw himself as a spent force (page 159).

Yet, in this as in so many other matters, Cross must continue to rely on Craft's published recollections while simultaneously undermining their credibility. You don't have to be convinced by all Stravinsky's disjunct, sometimes spluttering serial-ish works to find Craft a fabulous writer of prose. Was it Craft or Stravinsky himself who cottoned on to the fact that the composer's celebrity could be prolonged by fabricating an increasingly bogus literary identity? The pair's conversation books have been plundered for innumerable programme notes yet their aperçus now seem designed to conceal protracted gestation periods and a continuing indebtedness to Russian folk material. Cross is rightly sceptical.

Stravinsky's tireless quest for lucidity – and material comfort – in the face of the chaos of the modern age famously led

him from a prosperous St Petersburg upbringing, studying law and writing music in the style of his (private) teacher, Rimsky-Korsakov, to Californian exile and an unlikely stylistic rapprochement with the Second Viennese School. Those disparate cultural milieus are skilfully evoked here, together with the implication that the inner man was fundamentally unchanged by them. Cross is unconvinced that Stravinsky's public espousal of everything chic would have extended to bisexuality, as Craft latterly claimed, but is keen to reassess the central swathe of Art Deco output and its deliberately 'untimely' dislocated character.

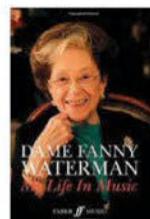
It was as the originator of precisely measured, machine-tooled musical units suitable for dancing that Stravinsky had no peer. Then again, what makes Cross's Richard Taruskin-inspired line distinctive is the hidden nostalgia he detects in all this. Stravinsky's sonic traces of home, including bells, chants and plaintive codas, may not sound much like Rachmaninov's but they too signify the underlying sadness of exile. While Stravinsky swiftly made himself the ultimate cosmopolitan composer, the wounds of estrangement remained. **David Gutman**

My Life in Music

By Dame Fanny Waterman

Faber Music, 184pp, HB, £20

ISBN 978-0-57153-918-1



It is difficult for a review of a book by Dame Fanny Waterman to be about anything other than the Leeds International Piano Competition, its foundation, development and reputation – particularly given my history with the event. But there is a lot more to her life, as disarmingly documented here.

Waterman's story is, like so many in the Jewish community of the north of England, that of being born to diaspora parents (from Ukraine), living at first in poverty and going on to a great career. The



Dame Fanny Waterman with the first four Leeds winners: (l-r) Rafael Orozco, Murray Perahia, Michael Roll and Radu Lupu

book details these early days and reveals the backdrop for the foundation of the competition. Those on either side of the Waterman divide – there are few who have had any contact with her who remain on the fence – cannot fail to be impressed by her ability to persuade, to make saying ‘yes’ far easier than saying ‘no’, or even than saying ‘not sure, but we will think about it’. The latter two are not options when talking with Waterman. It is obvious from the start that she is greatly impressed by the social positions of many of the people with whom she has associated. This may be mistaken for self-aggrandisement; she certainly has an ego, but she would not be the only one in the music world with one of those, and without it she would undoubtedly have never achieved what she has. She also has an almost naive way of expressing how good she has always been at playing, teaching, judging and organising; as these things are true, it is not self-centred arrogance.

Like so many in the music world, Waterman loves to be liked, as she admits in the book. And, despite her detractors, she has achieved it. She is adored by thousands, and deservedly so: she has done more to promote the piano and young pianists – particularly in the UK – than any other single person. She has also placed her home town of Leeds back on the musical

map. A constant during their heyday, she has appeared on the juries of virtually every major and many minor international competitions, as well as being chairman of every Leeds jury from 1981 to 2015.

It is one of my many personal regrets that I was never sent to Fanny Waterman for lessons – her thoughts on teaching young pianists are as sound as they come. And a chapter describing the early history of the Leeds Competition makes clear how many British competitors used to take part: 37 out of 105 in the first competition in 1963. In the 2012 competition, two British pianists made it to the first round, and they had both studied in the US. The decline – regularly bemoaned by Waterman – in British interest in competitions, summer schools and, indeed, being a solo pianist at all, has been, during that period, precipitous, and the reasons are there for all to see. Waterman is one of the few influential people who see the problem for what it is, and she is prepared, in her retirement – at the age of 95 – to try to do something about it.

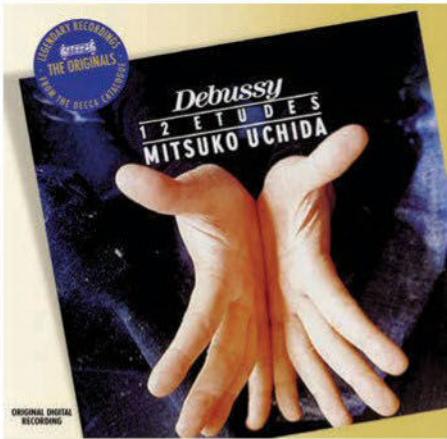
With such a strong character on the world music scene, rumours have always abounded. Some of these rumours are, perhaps unknowingly, put to bed in the book. Two I’m happy to consign to the waste bin are as follows: first, that Waterman, having been denied an opportunity to teach either

at Chethams or the RNCM, declared that she would make sure no one from west of the Pennines would ever get anywhere at Leeds; second, that the Soviet Union had refused to send any pianists in 1972 after Boris Petrushansky was beaten by Lupu in 1969, which was why the ’72 finals were dominated by three Americans. There’s perhaps a nugget of truth in the rumour that Waterman had threatened the jury that there would never be another Leeds if Lupu was eliminated in 1969, as they had voted. There is another side to every story – not least in this case, re-illuminating the fact that, however famous or great a jury member is, they will and do make misjudgements.

A fourth rumour is that Waterman makes all the decisions herself, and that the other jury members are merely ciphers bowing to her power. That she has very definite views and is prepared to stand by them is undeniable, but then that should apply to the rest of the jury too. That she chose her jury members on the basis of her own personal feelings about their character, fairness and musicianship is obvious, but it is also inevitable; if any of us had founded a competition and remained its driving force, how differently would we have done it?

A revealing, enlightening and very moving book – and, on second reading, even more so. **Peter Donohoe**

Classics RECONSIDERED



Debussy

Etudes Books 1 and 2

Mitsuko Uchida *p/f*

Decca The Originals M 475 7559 (47 • DDD)

The appeal of Debussy's Etudes to composers and to discerning performers has never been in doubt. Boulez and Barraqué are among those to have expressed admiration for their forward-looking elements, and pianists have been fascinated by their combined challenge to technical and imaginative resourcefulness. Whether they are therefore essentially musicians' music, or whether they might eventually enjoy comparable popularity to Debussy's other major piano works, remains to be seen.

Mitsuko Uchida's playing carries blazing conviction at every turn, and its sheer virtuosity is breathtaking (I don't regard



Bryce Morrison and **Harriet Smith** revisit the 1989 Philips recording of Debussy's Etudes from Mitsuko Uchida



myself as easily breathtaken). Vivid communication is helped by a fairly forward, resonant recording, which captures every nuance without detriment to overall perspectives.

For those already under the spell of these subtly elusive pieces it could all be a bit much. At first there did seem to me something hyperactive and spasmodic about Uchida's characterisation, as though she was taking each study by the scruff of the neck and shaking it. But gradually it became clear that subtler shades of sonority and mood were also being expressed. By the middle of the cycle of 12 I was hooked – the study 'Pour les octaves', No 5, is truly *joyeux et emporté*, the following scale studies are bordering on the miraculous, and the ornaments of No 8 display a sensitivity to harmony and texture that silences criticism.

By the end, having relished the sly wit of 'Les notes répétées', the quiet smouldering of 'Les sonorités opposées', the dreamlike rippling of 'Les arpèges composés', and the resilience of 'Les accords', I was not just won over but bowled over. I can see some Debussy lovers still finding the whole experience more dazzling than illuminating, but my own feeling is that these readings expand notions of Debussian style rather than violating it.

The comparative versions of the Etudes are more or less handicapped by deficiencies in recording quality. Returning for spot-check comparisons between all six versions I found Uchida supreme in every instance, and in pretty well every department, be it refinement of sonority, accent, timing, characterisation or sheer dexterity. **David Fanning** (7/90)

Bryce Morrison Listening once again to Mitsuko Uchida's 1989 recording of the Debussy Etudes made me more than ever aware of her astonishing range, vividness and articulacy. Even taking into account the competition from Gieseking (magical though often slipshod – try the opening of 'Pour les tierces'), Thibaudet with his dry-ice sparkle, Bavouzet and most of all Pollini, Uchida, more than anyone, makes you sense that the Etudes, together with Debussy's other late masterpieces, are a desperate last testament composed under tragic circumstances – an astonishing burst of creativity as he heard the Germans bombing his beloved France and was already suffering from the cancer that was to kill him three years later. Again, from Uchida you are made to confront the revolutionary nature of the Etudes; she makes you aware of how Debussy changed from a figure who was for some (the

outraged Paris Conservatoire) a 'self-centred voluptuary' to one with an inimitable blend of severity and fantasy.

Harriet Smith I think one of the great things about this set is that it came out of nowhere: it's still the only disc of French music that Uchida has recorded and it followed on from that classic Mozart concerto cycle. But, from the very opening, she delights in the way that Debussy takes the simple five-finger exercise and proceeds to subvert it with utter imagination and virtuosity. The way that she builds to the final climax, drawing from the keyboard a simply orchestral range of sonorities, is jaw-dropping. And so is the almost coolly limpid way with which she begins the second, 'Pour les tierces', which, as you say, goes awry in the Gieseking reading. Each Etude occupies a world of its own in Uchida's hands, and even though they're totally abstract, she's

such a storyteller that I find myself imagining hidden scenarios in each one.

BM It is indeed odd that Uchida, who has played the Preludes in public, has only made this single disc of Debussy. As you say, her playing is so acute and fiercely articulate that in music which is outwardly abstract she prompts an iridescent stream of consciousness in the listener worthy of Virginia Woolf. The Impressionism of works such as 'Reflets dans l'eau' or 'Jardins sous la pluie' may have given way to a bleaker vision (prompted by tragic circumstances beyond Debussy's control) but evocation and a flashing kaleidoscope of images become inevitable. Again, Uchida's pianistic command is so formidable that nothing obtrudes between composer and performer, between creator and recreator. As Richard Wigmore put it when this recording reappeared in Philips's



'Astonishing range, vividness and articulacy': Mitsuko Uchida in Debussy's Etudes

Great Pianists of the 20th Century series, Uchida's performances exhibit 'nerve-end playing of surpassing fantasy and refinement'.

HS You become so aware in her reading of the march of characters from his earlier music – almost as if he were bidding them farewell in the same way Rachmaninov did in all those self-references in the *Symphonic Dances* – Puck, Pickwick, the Little Shepherd, for all that their titles are abstract you hear echoes of them. Or at least I do. Yet in a piece such as 'Pour les sixtes' Uchida also lays bare the parallels with Chopin's own Etude, Op 25 No 8. She makes you very aware of where these Debussy studies came from, which in itself was hardly surprising given that they're dedicated to Chopin.

BM Again, you may marvel at the whirling *agitato* (more than *un poco* from Uchida) in the *au mouvement* section of 'Pour les sixtes' but the final dissolving of such unrest is no less remarkable. It is surely one of Uchida's greatest strengths that she can switch from one extreme to another with such lightning rapidity and assurance.

HS That's what makes her Schumann so superlative – especially pieces such as *Davidsbündlertänze*. But in that *scherzando* section there's also such flair – you never get even a hint of the difficulties of what Debussy is throwing at his pianist.

BM I should say at this point that if, for some, Uchida's manner is *très nerveux*, she is no less acute at realising the way Debussy allows his argument to subside into a visionary mist. Hear her in the closing bars of 'Pour les quartes' (*lointain*, then *più lento e perdendo*); no composer marks more precisely than Debussy and few pianists have taken him so acutely at his word than Uchida.

HS I agree: and the markings after that – *volubile* ('skittish') and then the final *estinto* ('extinguished', such a brilliantly apt direction) – and that last detached C in the bass are given just the right degree of prominence yet simultaneously a sense of finality. She treats all these markings as a kind of map of the terrain yet there's nothing slavish about the results – they sound all her own.

BM In 'Pour les octaves' (No 5) she is among the few to acknowledge the direction *librement rythmé* and in the eight-fingered *moto perpetuo* (No 6) with its *glissandos* like flashes of summer lightning, Uchida reminds you that she once appeared in a dictionary as the girl with the fastest reflexes in Japan ('You see, I was unaware of difficulties until others told me of their problems').

HS I must admit that hadn't struck me before about the freedom indication in No 5, but you're absolutely right. And as for the Sixth, it's hardly surprising that Debussy wrote that forlorn letter to Fauré in 1917 in which he said, 'I can no longer play the piano well enough to risk a performance of the Etudes...there are too many keys; I haven't enough fingers any more; and suddenly I forget where the pedals are!' Yet in the Sixth Uchida seems to cheat time like the greatest sportsman, and she even finds a quiet wit in that final note. Again, it's the extremes that she conveys so vividly. What an ending to the First Book!

Then, in the Seventh, what strikes me is the way she makes you realise more than most pianists its similarities with the Sixth – the whirring energy, the focus on the upper register, its quietness interrupted by sudden outbursts – though, to my mind, the Seventh is also darker, that *scherzando* indication emotionally ambiguous.

BM That's true also in the Ninth, of 'Pour les notes repétées', where *scherzando* is as ambiguous as, say, Chopin in his scherzos. Merely playful it is not. But between that you have 'Pour les agréments', the most luxuriant of the Etudes – one that Boulez called 'a barcarolle on a somewhat Italian sea' – and here Uchida achieves an ideal poise (a memory of happier times?).

But it is in the final 'Pour les accords' that she achieves her greatest triumph. It's so fast and fearless and her only possible rival here is Pollini, who also sees this violent fist-shaking gesture as a far cry from a musician who once said, 'I compose music for an instrument without hammers'.

HS Yes, but what makes it peerless – and I agree it's astounding – is the way she softens the *Lento* section, which lives up to its *molto rubato*. Here she seems to breathe a different air entirely and we're back with Debussy the visionary – staring into a new world. The way that dissolves back into the initial theme is another stroke of genius on Uchida's part. I think we're agreed here – this is a classic that is as astounding today as it was 25 years ago.

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

The serenade in the 20th century

Most will associate the serenade with the traditional, benign form of musical greeting sung in the evening to a beloved, but **David Gutman's** wide-ranging selection demonstrates its diversity and surprising endurance

While the indeterminate label of 'serenade' might not seem a natural fit for compositional effort in modern times, its aesthetic implications continued to inspire creative endeavour throughout the 20th century.

Archetypally pertaining to the musical salutation sung beneath a beloved's window, the tag also long denoted a pleasing evening diversion, as opposed to the aubade to be performed in the morning and the nocturne associated with night. Prokofiev's opera *Betrothal in a Monastery* (1940-41) contains a rare 20th-century example of al fresco vocal serenading untouched by irony, but from *Don Giovanni* to *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* the serenade had been set up for

a fall. The autograph piano score of Ravel's *Sérénade grotesque* (c1893) carries only the title 'Sérénade', with the initial marking *très rude*. Nielsen's *Serenata in vano* ('Serenade in Vain') of 1914 wryly skewers his own philandering. And moving well beyond a sceptical take on the genre's promise of amiability under clear evening skies, the anguish is raw in the 'Serenade' movement of Shostakovich's String Quartet No 15 (1974).

Less vehement allusions to the serenade's traditionally portable, plucked-string accompaniment appear in the alternative class of concert works designed to be played by instrumental groups to a cultivated audience of more than one.

This genre reached its apogee with Mozart before morphing into something looser in the mid-19th century. Serenades by Brahms, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Suk and Strauss share a carefree atmosphere, marked melodiousness and a classically selective approach to instrumentation.

Making my own picks from a broad 20th-century church I've omitted nostalgic utterances from composers as various as Reger and Binge, regretfully cutting back on neo-classical earnestness as well. However masterly, Shapero's strings-only, five-movement Serenade in D (1945) inevitably sounds somewhat diminished in the string quintet reduction currently available. **6**



Erich Wolfgang Korngold in 1936, the year of his score for 'Anthony Adverse': when composing his Symphonic Serenade, his creativity seems to have been unfettered



Stenhammar
Serenade in F, Op 31
 Royal Flemish Philharmonic /
 Christian Lindberg
 BIS (8/14)

There can't be many lengthy five-movement works poised so gloriously between suite and symphony, and there are few that so consistently evoke a smile. Stenhammar's admiration for Strauss and Sibelius is self-evident. Like Moeran's slighter Serenade in G, the project was pruned prior to publication. Still, there's no sense of strain about the final mix. BIS's spacious sound engineering creates the illusion of outdoor performance on a dreamy Mendelssohnian night.



Wirén:
Serenade, Op 11
 Academy of St Martin in
 the Fields / Neville Marriner
 Decca Eloquence (4/80^R)

Channelling the string serenade archetype without undue fuss, Dag Wirén's breakthrough piece appeared just before Lennox Berkeley's similarly succinct sparkler. There isn't room to shortlist both, but the ASMF's crisp advocacy of the Wirén is irresistible, complemented as it is by the special warmth of the recording venue. Older readers may associate its finale's unhurried snap with *Monitor*, the BBC's flagship arts programme, for which it served as signature tune.



Bernstein
Serenade
 Hilary Hahn vn Baltimore SO /
 David Zinman
 Sony Classical (3/99^R)

Restricting himself to solo violin, strings, harp and percussion, Bernstein saddled his five-movement semi-concerto with a bibulous Platonic backstory and a slew of overemphatic recordings. The teenage Hilary Hahn and friends restore the right kind of quicksilver sophistication to a score written concurrently with the serenade by Hindemith's outstanding African-American pupil Ulysses Kay. Was there something in the air?



Schoenberg
Serenade, Op 24
 John Carol Case bar Melos
 Ensemble / Bruno Maderna
 Decca Eloquence (11/62^R)

Not everyone will hear the 'warmth and gaiety' discerned by biographer Malcolm MacDonald, despite enlivening timbral hints of *Pierrot lunaire* and Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat*. Maderna - Darmstadt modernist and (remarkably) a purveyor of serenades - keeps the seven symmetrically balanced movements together at relative cautious speeds. The musicians include guitarist John Williams and, in the central 12-tone vocal setting, John Carol Case.



Vaughn Williams
Serenade to Music
 Soloists;
 LPO / Roger Norrington
 Decca Eloquence (10/97^R)

Not the composer's prescient Serenade in A minor (1898), but his 1938 Shakespearean homage to Sir Henry Wood. The scene is nocturnal; the text equates music and love both sacred and profane. While a harp dimly recalls the thrum of a Renaissance lute, the sweet music has less to do with a recognisable serenade aesthetic than with a particular strain of warm D major invention signifying new love. Roger Norrington enlists the starriest of soloists.



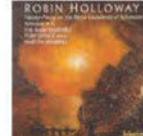
Stravinsky
Serenade in A
 Leon Fleisher
 Vanguard Classics (11/06)
 Commissioned to fill four

78 sides with Stravinsky as executant, this four-movement serenade was both bankable and chic, even if its deadpan character was to some extent a response to the composer's pianistic limitations. And yet music always has a life of its own. Poulenc's *Gloria* would purloin its opening idea for quite different expressive ends, and Leon Fleisher finds unsuspected depth and luminosity in the rigid archaisms of the original.



Britten
Serenade, Op 31
 Toby Spence ten Martin Owen
 hn Scottish Ens / Clio Gould
 Linn (5/05)

Britten had another working title for this piece. Did his final choice reflect his curious belief that this supremely accomplished song-cycle was 'not important stuff' and merely 'quite pleasant, I think'? Present-day critics tend to represent its central theme as the corruption of innocence rather than relishing it as multilayered - in part nostalgic - evening listening. Toby Spence fronts a performance on a smaller scale than most, never over-egging the psychological pudding.



Holloway
Serenade in C, Op 41
 Nash Ensemble
 Hyperion (9/98)

Is there a living composer more committed to the serenade than Robin Holloway? This, the first of his several such works, redeploys the instrumental line-up of Schubert's Octet to play games with overused phraseology, light music cliché and harmonic bromide. But it's only superficially Edwardian: there's an acerbic postmodern twist in its tail, deftly handled here by the ensemble that commissioned the score. The composer himself calls the piece a 'neo-classic Schubert-Biedermeier divertimento'.



Maderna
Serenata per un satellite
 Contempoartensemble /
 Mauro Ceccanti
 Arts

A neo-classical serenata reflecting the tutelage of Malipiero was one of Maderna's early successes, and he never stopped writing them. The example here (1969) is radical indeed: an 'open form' sonic sculpture in which precisely notated parts are accompanied by the instruction that performers should play 'what they can', improvising with the notes that are set down. It's remarkable that the pattern of fragmentary events sounds as benign and serenade-like as it does.

Korngold

Symphonic Serenade, Op 39 BBC Philharmonic / Matthias Bamert
 Chandos (3/97^R)

Relieved of the need to strain for symphonic gravitas or cinematic accessibility, Korngold here asks much of his large and frequently subdivided string body. Stellar advocacy and adequate rehearsal time must one day propel this late masterpiece to the heart of the repertoire. Meanwhile, the BBC Philharmonic, responsible for its belated UK premiere,

cope well enough, never blowing the invention out of scale. Not that this is exactly light music. The second movement is the most astringent of *pizzicato* showcases, the third a threnody indebted to Bruckner and (late) Mahler. Most serenade-like is the equitable opening idea - though finally even this acquires a resigned poignancy.

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Elgar's Violin Sonata

Inspired by the composer's stay at a secluded cottage in West Sussex, Elgar's Violin Sonata in E minor, Op 82, challenges both violinist and pianist. **Jeremy Dibble** assesses the available interpretations on record

Towards the end of the First World War, in poor health and on the insistence of his wife, Elgar took a cottage ('Brinkwells') at Fittleworth (in what is now West Sussex), sublet by the English landscape painter Rex Vicat Cole. There, in 1918 and 1919, amid the richly wooded countryside, ensconced in the peace and tranquillity of his rural hideaway, he completed three chamber works and the Cello Concerto. The Violin Sonata in E minor was begun in August 1918 and within a month it was finished. Its first hearing was at a British Music Society meeting in London on March 21, 1919, with Elgar's great violinist friend WH Reed accompanied by the conductor Landon Ronald. The first public performance, however, was not until exactly two months later, at Wigmore Hall in London, where it was given by Albert Sammons and William Murdoch, who immediately became the work's first champions.

Elgar maintained that his chamber works did not form part of any contemporary vanguard. Yet, in writing to the sonata's dedicatee, family friend Marie Joshua (who died days later), he admitted to a fondness for its nostalgic ambience: 'I fear it does not carry us any further,' he wrote on September 6, 1918, 'but it is full of golden sounds and I like it, but you must not expect anything violently chromatic or cubist.' Elgar had not visited the chamber-music idiom for decades, but its inherent

discipline and intimacy compelled him towards a new concentration of thought in terms of form, counterpoint and texture which was essentially different from the colourful and liberal *Schwung* of his orchestral works. That said, in the case of the Violin Sonata (and the Piano Quintet) Elgar was forced to embrace the piano, an instrument for which he had no natural affinity and whose sounds and textures did not fit happily with his natural conception of musical ideas in instrumental guise. In fact, while the task of the violinist is an entirely idiomatic one, full of the once-aspiring Elgar as violin virtuoso in its understanding of the instrument, that of the pianist is entirely another matter. From start to finish the piano part is an orchestra manqué that does not lie easily under the hands, and much of the texture, harmonic or contrapuntal, needs to be negotiated with a knowledge of Elgar's orchestral manner.

One other challenge of the sonata is the extraordinary profusion of thematic material, especially in the outer movements, where the composer places emphasis not on development but on the relationship between extended exposition (which, like in the First Symphony, overflows with thematic material) and recapitulation. The central, ternary Romance, too, has the effect of being a fusion of a mercurial *scherzo* in the strangely exotic 'wood magic' (to use



Elgar at Brinkwells, where he wrote the sonata

the words of Elgar's wife) and a traditional slow movement. In addition, throughout the work, Elgar's treatment of key is highly unconventional. In much of the first movement, A minor (rather than E minor) dominates and the second-subject area constantly, even restively, fluctuates; and in the middle movement, the C sharp minor and A major of the 'wood magic' vie continually for position in contrast to the



PHOTOGRAPH: THE ELGAR BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM

lyrical centrepiece in B flat major. Only in the last movement, in a radiant and wistful E major, does the work finally settle in the 'home' tonality, providing a sense of resolution to the entire work.

EARLY RECORDINGS

The earliest recording of the Elgar was made by **Albert Sammons** and William Murdoch in 1935 (now available in Naxos's

'Great Violinists' series). Sammons was by this date approaching the latter years of his career, yet this recording provides a potent link with Elgar's own era, both stylistically and in terms of violin technique. There is a little untidiness here and there, but one can still feel the intimation of that rich tone that Sammons drew from his 1696 Matteo Gofriller. He is probably at his best in the slow

movement's lyrical heart, though there is much lovely playing in the finale as well.

Many of the recordings before the 1980s are now unavailable in the catalogue. **Max Rostal** and Colin Horsley recorded the work in London for Argo in 1954, along with Walton's Violin Sonata and Delius's Violin Sonata No 2, a favoured coupling on many later recordings. Happily, it is still available, remastered,



Elgar's good friend WH (William Henry) Reed, who was the first to perform the sonata in March 1919

on the Testament label in mono. Rostal's tone is pleasing if a little diffident. The first movement is too slow and deliberate, lacking that necessary ingredient of agitation and energy, though there is, admittedly, more variety in the other two movements. Other recordings, however (such as those made by Jesse Tryon and John La Montaine in 1953; Alan Loveday and Leonard Cassini in 1966; the Weiss Duo in 1976; and two recordings from EMI: Hugh Bean and David Parkhouse in a particularly sensitive interpretation from 1971, and Yehudi Menuhin with his sister Hepzibah in 1978), are no longer officially available except through second-hand outlets. A 'tribute' to Canadian-born violinist **Sergei Bezkorvany**, on the Claudio Bohema label, features Elgar's sonata, recorded in 1974 with the pianist Julian Dawson, among an interesting programme of music by Turina, Martinů and Szymanowski. While Bezkorvany evinces some delicate playing, the tempos

of the outer movements are hopelessly slow, especially in the finale, and I would find it hard to live with this for very long.

RECORDINGS OF THE 1980s AND '90S

Made in the year of his recording debut, **Nigel Kennedy's** reading of the sonata on Chandos (1984) is electrifying. Full of passion and careful interaction with his pianist Peter Pettinger (who gives plenty of 'orchestral' tone to the accompaniment), Kennedy is almost percussive with Elgar's more restless music, particularly the invigorating octave double-stopping at the end of the first movement, but he also shows touching affection in the Romance, notably in the transition from the opening section to the lyrical melody (one that can often sound a little artificial if negotiated casually). And, as a further contrast, the finale has a rhythmic precision and a fluidity across its range of thematic ideas which enhance Elgar's unusual handling of sonata form.

A product of Dorothy DeLay and the Juilliard School (as was Kennedy), **Lorraine McAslan** made her recording debut with the Elgar and Walton sonatas in 1985 on ASV (now available on Resonance). She has a generous tone with excellent intonation. Her use of *portamento* is attractive, but her *rubato* – although appropriate to Elgar's spasms of *largamente* and *accelerando* – is at times a little too generous, and holds up the momentum just a bit too much for comfort. I prefer her slow movement, which begins surprisingly quickly but does settle down in the lyrical core.

Five recordings are still available from the 1990s. The first of them, by **Marcia Crayford** and Ian Brown (members of the Nash Ensemble – who perform Elgar's Piano Quintet on this disc), appeared on Hyperion in 1992. Crayford uses rather less *portamento* than either Kennedy or McAslan, but there is plenty of expression in the tone and vibrato which complements the effective contrasts of *tempo primo* and *rubato*. The recorded sound and production (one of Andrew Keener's many *tours de force*) are clean and vibrant, as is Brown's fine realisation of the 'orchestral' accompaniment.

There is an urgency to the interpretation of the first movement by **Oliver Lewis** and Jeremy Filsell on the Guild label (1995). Filsell's clean, crisp piano sound is splendid, though the recorded sound seems a little distant. If anything, this reading lacks a degree of romantic intimacy that is so essential to ideas like the modal second subject of the first movement, with its mesmeric cross-string figurations. Here, the players could be more relaxed and wistful, and the same could be said of the 'wood magic', where the delicate filigree seems a tad too purposeful and self-conscious.

Also dating from 1995 and made at Berlin's Teldec studio, **Maxim Vengerov's** recording of the sonata with Revital Chachamov is now available as part of a 20-disc collection from Warner Classics (a set well worth having for its sheer range

BEST VALUE

Maxim Vengerov and Revital Chachamov

Warner Classics (S) (20 discs) 2564 63151-4

Vengerov's energy is infectious, and the sense of rhythmic drive he and Chachamov bring to the first and last movements is compelling.



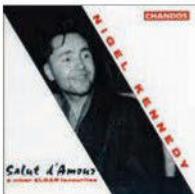
As part of a large set at an attractive price, there is also a chance to hear Vengerov in a broad range of his finest recordings, on an array of fabulous violins.

BEST COUPLING

Nigel Kennedy and Peter Pettinger

Chandos (P) CHAN8380

Among the numerous recordings that feature the sonata and a range of Elgar's violin miniatures, Kennedy's dynamic interpretation,



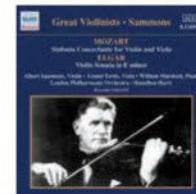
especially of the outer movements, is irresistible. As for the shorter pieces, they come alive via Kennedy's splendid technique and his sheer enjoyment.

BEST ARCHIVE

Albert Sammons and William Murdoch

Naxos (B) 8 110957

Made in 1935, towards the end of Sammons's glittering career, this first recording of the Elgar Violin Sonata connects us with the

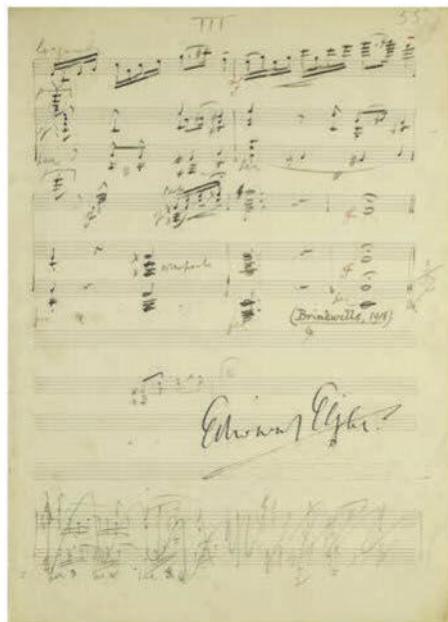


composer's own era and gives us a fascinating insight into the Edwardian interpretative style that was inherited by Sammons.

of repertoire and dynamism). Vengerov shows his characteristic superb agility, phrasing and sense of control on the 'Kiesewetter' Stradivari c1723 (though with surprisingly little *portamento*). Why the decision was made not to cover the high harmonic E that Vengerov misses inexplicably at the beginning of the first movement's reprise is not clear, but for those who love Vengerov's flair (his effervescent personality is all over this CD), such a fleeting detail is easily ignored. Hot on the heels of Vengerov was his compatriot **Lydia Mordkovich** with Julian Milford on Chandos (1996). The extrovert vitality of Mordkovich's first movement exceeds that of Kennedy, but her conspicuous variegation of tempos is rather disconcerting. Although her lyrical playing and rich tone are appealing, the sense of impetuosity at climaxes is often excessive to the point where it can sound almost uncontrolled – something that rather mars the end of the first movement and the emotional peak of the slow movement. By contrast, the infectious romantic aura of **Tasmin Little** and Martin Roscoe on the GMN label (now issued on Dal Segno) in 1999 is a paragon of balance and emotional abandon. Careful attention is given to Elgar's dynamics and nuances laced with some effective and tasteful *portamento*, persuasive vibrato and some really rich tone for Elgar's *sul G* markings. This is a lovely, insightful reading, played with refinement and tenderness, yet with some guts behind it; and the coupling of Bax's scandalously neglected Second Sonata of 1915, again performed with tremendous commitment by both players, is a bonus.

FROM 2000 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Since the millennium, a veritable plethora of recordings of Elgar's sonata – so far 13 in all – has entered the catalogue. In 2000, Naxos issued a unique three-CD set of all Elgar's music associated with the solo violin with **Marat Bisengaliev** – whose performances are sympathetic if just occasionally lacking that essential sentiment that Elgar's affecting lyricism demands. This I feel most acutely in the slow movement. Nevertheless, Bisengaliev's interpretation has energy and insight, and Benjamin Frith adds many a supportive nuance to the accompaniment. Altogether, this set (which includes the Violin Concerto and several miniatures) is great value. Issued the same year, Nimbus's ambisonic recording with **Daniel Hope** and Simon Mulligan has an intimacy and sensitivity, especially in the quieter passages. The flowing quavers of the first movement's second subject are a little pedestrian at



Autograph manuscript of the end of the sonata

times and need more flexibility, and the coda of the same movement needs greater nervous agitation, but the spacious handling of the slow movement is persuasive and winning in its moments of hushed intensity. Like past recordings, Hope's coupling is the Walton, but it is nice also to have Finzi's affecting Elegy as a filler.

Burkhard Hofmann's tone on his 2003 DG Eloquence recording with Alan Newcombe – programmed imaginatively with Delius's Third Sonata and John Ireland's fiery Second Sonata (which appeared a year before Elgar's)

– is sadly rather dry, never comes to the boil, and at times feels emotionally rather distant. This is not the case, however, with the Dutch violinist **Simone Lamsma** (with Yurie Miura) on Naxos (2005), who one immediately senses is much more committed to Elgar's restive emotional world. Her quick, pulsating vibrato certainly lends the music a sense of drive and verve, and her lyrical playing is receptive to Elgar's ever-changing array of nuances, especially in the lively finale. In this she has the edge over Bisengaliev's earlier Naxos recording, though from time to time she is a just little too hurried with the eccentric gestures of the slow movement, and the transition to the 'big tune' needs more finesse.

On a CD entitled 'The Pity of War' on Orchid Classics (2003) and produced in association with the Imperial War Museum, **Matthew Trusler** and Martin Roscoe include Elgar's sonata alongside those of Debussy and Janáček, together with readings (on a second CD) by Samuel West of poems by Wilfred Owen. Trusler's atmospheric interpretation is suitably stylish, elegiac and warm; he has a suppleness of tone, and his tasteful vibrato is used to the full in the Romance, though a dash of *portamento* here and there would have helped to create that *echt* Elgar sound. Also featuring Strauss's Violin Sonata and Ravel's early 1897 sonata, **Jonathan Crow** and Paul Stewart's recording on ATMA Classique (2006) is sonorous and inviting. Crow's velvet tone and vibrato are generous,

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS

1935	Sammons , Murdoch
1954	Rostal , Horsley
1974	Bezkorvany , Dawson
1984	Kennedy , Pettinger
1985	McAslan , Blakey
1992	Crayford , Brown (Nash Ens)
1995	Lewis , Filsell
1995	Vengerov , Chachamov
1996	Mordkovich , Milford
1999	Little , Roscoe
2000	Bisengaliev , Frith
2000	Hope , Mulligan
2003	Hofmann , Newcombe
2003	Trusler , Roscoe
2005	Lamsma , Miura
2006	Crow , Stewart
2006	van Keulen , Brautigam
2007	Bezrodny , Ilja
2007	Siem , Korobeinikov
2010	Christodoulou , Fingerhut
2012	Marshall-Luck , Rickard
2013	Stonehill , Burns (Steinberg Duo)
2013	Waley-Cohen , Watkins

RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)

Naxos	© 8 110957 (8/35 th)
Testament	© SBT1319 (6/57 th , 5/04)
Claudio	© CB59972
Chandos	© CHAN8380 (7/84 th , 8/85)
Resonance	© CDRSN3060 (11/85 th , 5/89 th)
Hyperion	© CDH55301 (8/93 th)
Guild	© GMCD7124
Warner Classics	© (20 discs) 2564 63151-4
Chandos	© CHAN9624 (8/98)
Dal Segno	© DSPRCD047 (3/01 th)
Naxos	© ③ 8 572643/5 (7/01 th)
Nimbus	© NI5666 (3/01)
DG Eloquence	© ELQ476 6884
Orchid	© ② ORC100001
Naxos	© 8 557984
ATMA Classique	© ACD2 2534 (1/09)
Challenge Classics	© CC72171 (1/08)
Alba	© ABCD291
Challenge Classics	© CC72293
Guild	© GMCD7358
EM Records	© EMRCD011 (6/13)
Nimbus Alliance	© NI6240 (12/13)
Signum	© SIGCD376 (7/14)

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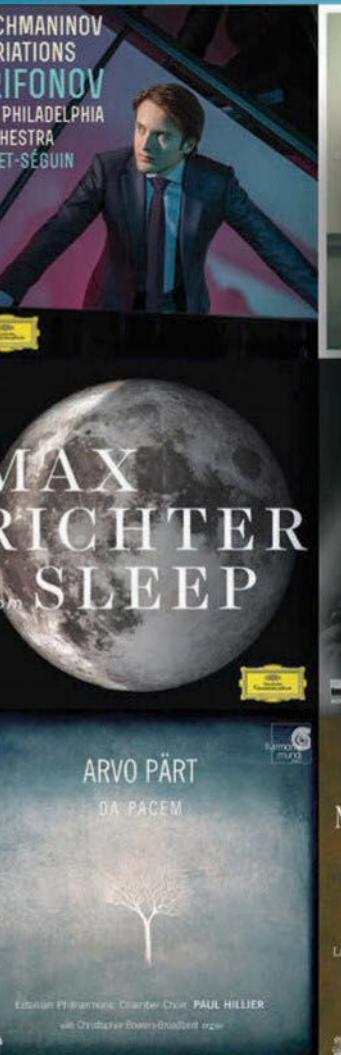
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'A lovely, insightful reading': Tasmin Little, who recorded the Elgar Sonata with Martin Roscoe in 1999

and he excels in the long sustained melodies, though I am less sure about some of the over-ponderous tempos that tend to drag.

Isabelle van Keulen and Ronald Brautigam give a spirited performance on their CD on Challenge Classics – issued in 2007 to mark the anniversaries of Elgar, Sibelius and Grieg. There is a no-nonsense approach to the first movement, which zips along, though some of the endearing nuances of phrase and dynamic are lost even if the climactic coda is forceful (notwithstanding one or two inaccuracies). I warm more to van Keulen's passion in the Romance, where she is less inclined to hurry; but the finale is a little too fast for comfort.

On a disc from Alba (2007) featuring Prokofiev, Rimsky-Korsakov and Sibelius, **Anna-Liisa Bezrodny** and Ivari Ilja live up to the CD's title 'Con Spirito' with a vigorous and committed interpretation. There is a sparkle to this performance which is compelling – stylish *portamento*, balanced tempos, a vivacious percussiveness to match Kennedy's; but the 'wood magic' of the Romance seems less coherent. On another CD from 2007 marking Elgar's anniversary as well as that of Grieg (again on Challenge Classics), **Charlie Siem** and

Andrei Korobeinikov are on great form. I can't fault the fervent romanticism of their interpretation. Siem's *sul G* playing, clean intonation and judicious *portamento* are fabulous, but some of the slower tempos in the first movement are perhaps a little indulgent for my taste, as they have the effect of undermining the broader feeling of forward motion. This is better in the Romance, which has a lighter, easier quality, a feeling which also infects the ethereal lyricism of the finale. Elgar, Debussy and Sibelius are included on

Efi Christodoulou and Margaret Fingerhut's recording on Guild (2010). Fingerhut's accompaniment is authoritative, but I am less enamoured by Christodoulou's variable tone and unequal phrasing; there are one or two slips, and somehow that quintessence of poetic nostalgia is missing.

Of the three most recent recordings, **Rupert Marshall-Luck** and Matthew Rickard offer the most expansive performance on EM Records. The recorded sound from the concert hall at Wyastone Leys is liberal and immediate; and for fans of British music, the unusual coupling with Gurney's Violin Sonata of 1918/19 (in its first ever recording) makes this disc well worth

having. Marshall-Luck offers a clean, expressive sound throughout, though more vibrato and *portamento* might have given it a bit more colour and style. The slow movement, for all its boldness of sound, is perhaps, like Crow's interpretation, too ponderous and measured, but the finale has a freshness and rhythmic élan that lift the overall performance. Although there are things to admire about the recording by the Steinberg Duo (**Louisa Stonehill** and Nicholas Burns) on Nimbus Alliance (2013), the choice of tempos, notably the exceptionally slow reprise in the first movement, is at times peculiar to the point of incongruity.

Last but not least, the two-CD set '1917' on Signum Classics features the Elgar once again with other contemporaneous works: Debussy's sonata and (this time) Sibelius's Five Pieces, Op 81, with the novel addition of Respighi's Sonata in B minor.

Tamsin Waley-Cohen and Huw Watkins give a performance of quality, high on my list. The interaction of both performers has a precision and palpable tension maintained throughout the work, and Waley-Cohen's control of the lyrical dimension is admirable – but (if I am to split hairs) might have gained a little more from some tasteful *portamento* to go with her sympathetic use of vibrato and affecting *rubato*.

Picking my top choice from this considerable range of recordings has not been easy. The number of talented violinists and pianists is dazzling, but if I am to pinpoint one recording that I continually come back to it would be Little's 1999 recording for its technical poise, nuance and emotional sympathy. The world of Elgar's late chamber music is unquestionably a rarefied one: texturally problematic, full of delicacy, yet imbued with a singular chemistry of extrovert abandon and personal introspection – a complex equilibrium that is not easy to capture, but which Little and Roscoe achieve with love and devotion. ⚭

TOP CHOICE

Tasmin Little and **Martin Roscoe**

Dal Segno ® DSPRCD047

While giving careful attention to Elgar's dynamics and nuances, Little and Roscoe balance passion and lyricism and bring a clarity, poetry and vibrance to the

Tasmin Little
Martin Roscoe

Elgar: Violin Sonata Op.82
Bax: Violin Sonata No.2



extraordinary profusion of melody in the composer's unconventional score. The coupling of Bax's fine Second Sonata is a bonus.

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Richard Rodney Bennett

James Jolly celebrates one of the most eclectic of British composers

Few musicians, with perhaps the exception of Leonard Bernstein, embraced so many different musical voices and styles, with such success, as Richard Rodney Bennett (who would have been 80 this year – he died in 2012). As a composer, his music ran the gamut from the heart-easingly late-Romantic (his rather Vaughan Williams-esque *Reflections on a 16th Century Tune*, say) via the harmonically more challenging Piano Concerto No 1, written for Stephen Kovacevich (and recorded by him) to the full-on atonality of his *Five Studies* for piano. His film music was very classy and invariably made a powerful impression – try *Murder on the Orient Express* or *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. When writing for an instrument other than his own (he was a very fine pianist), he totally absorbed the style as in his lovely *Impromptus* for guitar. His choral music, too, is glorious – the Shakespearian *Sea Change* is astounding for its imagination and sheer virtuosity. And one should never overlook his utterly idiomatic performances – as both pianist and singer – of music of such greats as Gershwin, Cole Porter, Cy Coleman or Richard Rodgers.

- **Reflections on a 16th Century Tune**
Philharmonia / Hickox
Chandos
- **Murder on the Orient Express**
BBC PO / Gamba
Chandos
- **Far from the Madding Crowd**
BBC PO / Gamba
Chandos
- **Letters to Lindbergh**
NYCos National Girls Choir
Signum Classics
- **Gershwin** Porgy and Bess – Bess, oh where's my Bess
Bennett
CfP
- **Rodgers** State Fair – It Might as well be Spring
Bennett
Chandos

- **Piano Concerto No 1**
Kovacevich; LSO / Gibson
Decca
- **Sea Change**
Cambridge Singers / Rutter
Collegium
- **Five Impromptus**
Grondona
Stradivari
- **Five Studies**
Jones
Metronome

Gotta toccata

Jed Distler presents keyboard music to give the fingers a workout

Toccatas embrace speed, suppleness, lightness and finger dexterity. They also can incorporate looser, freer, more declamatory passages, or even be multi-movement works. Sweelinck's A minor typifies a rhapsodic Baroque toccata. Bach's famous D minor Toccata is terser, more dramatic and attention-getting; no wonder it remains a popular warhorse. By contrast, Ravel's dapper, airtight and elegantly constructed final movement from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* must be executed like an expert engraver. But pianists can let go more as Prokofiev Toccata's combustible momentum unfolds, as Horowitz's mighty digits prove. The earnestly knuckle-busting Schumann Toccata becomes utterly irreverent and playful when Georges Cziffra's in charge, as opposed to the majestically mobile earful Pierre Cochereau serves up in the finale to Widor's Fifth Organ Symphony.

Contemporary composers also approach toccatas in myriad ways. Petrassi's large-scale work abounds with blazing two-handed counterpoint and long-lined flourishes, as do Harold Meltzer's delightful mini-toccatas for harpsichord. Sofia Gubaidulina's *Toccata-Troncata* is another story: terse, stark and significant as much for what it says as for what it doesn't say. Alvin Curran's *Hope Street Tunnel Blues III* is a minimalist tour de force that requires one to rapidly alternate chords between hands at top speed, non-stop, transforming any pianist into a toccata machine.

- **Sweelinck** Toccata in A minor
Black
Centaur



Richard Rodney Bennett: an eclectic master

- **JS Bach** Toccata and Fugue in D minor, BWV565
Butt
Harmonia Mundi
- **Ravel** Le Tombeau de Couperin - Toccata
Thibaudet
Decca
- **Prokofiev** Toccata, Op 11
Horowitz
Sony Classical
- **Schumann** Toccata, Op 7
Cziffra
BNF Collection
- **Widor** Symphony No 5 - Toccata
Cochereau
Philips
- **Petrassi** Toccata
Massa
Capriccio
- **Meltzer** Five Toccatas
Viniikour
Sono Luminus
- **Gubaidulina** Toccata-Troncata
Rauchs
BIS
- **Curran** Hope Street Tunnel Blues III
Brubaker
Arabesque



The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen to the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live performances as well as concerts and operas available to watch online, including a chance to watch the Berlin Phil's Chief Conductor-elect at work with his new orchestra

St David's Hall, Cardiff & BBC Radio 3

BBC NOW performs UK premiere of Debussy's completed Nocturne for Violin and Orchestra, January 22

Under the baton of its Chief Conductor, Thomas Søndergård, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales presents the UK premiere of Debussy's *Nocturne for Violin and Orchestra*, completed and orchestrated by Robert Orledge, with Akiko Suwanai the soloist. The evening also celebrates what would have been Henri Dutilleux's 100th birthday with *Métaboles* and *Sur la même accord*. Then, the second half of the concert is devoted to Mozart's Requiem with soloists Susan Gritton (soprano), Jennifer Johnston (mezzo), Timothy Robinson (tenor) and Alistair Miles (bass). Radio 3 will broadcast the concert live.

bbc.co.uk/bbcnow/events, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Leeds Town Hall; Barbican, London & BBC Radio 3

Nicholas Collon conducts the NYO, January 2 & 3, broadcast January 4

As the founder and Principal Conductor of Aurora Orchestra and Principal Conductor of the Residentie Orkest in The Hague (taking up the position this year), Nicholas Collon is one of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain's most illustrious alumni. This two-concert event sees him conducting the orchestra in Prokofiev's Symphony No 5, and Korngold's Violin Concerto with soloist Tai Murray. You can catch the concert either in Leeds or London, or on Radio 3 on January 4.

nyo.org.uk, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Wigmore Hall, London & BBC Radio 3

Mozart's Piano Concerto No 12, K414, with quartet accompaniment and Elgar's Piano Quintet, January 5 (with the broadcast on January 6)

If you haven't yet heard pianist James Baillieu, whose talent as an accompanist has made him a prize winner at the Wigmore Hall Song Competition, the Das Lied International Song Competition, the Kathleen Ferrier and the Richard Tauber Competitions, then it's worth making a beeline for his current Wigmore Hall residency. This collaboration with the Heath Quartet sees him perform as soloist in the string-quartet scoring of Mozart's Piano Concerto No 12, and as a chamber partner for Elgar's Piano Quintet.

wigmore-hall.org.uk, bbc.co.uk/radio3

WATCH ONLINE

Digital Concert Hall - Meet Kirill Petrenko at the helm of the Berlin Phil



Elgar • Stephan et al

Here's proof positive that the members of the Berlin Philharmonic have made a canny choice in Kirill Petrenko as their next chief. The orchestra's Digital Concert Hall archive features two concerts with the Russian-born maestro, both of which readily demonstrate his innate sensitivity, engaging podium manner and ability to secure performances that combine scrupulous preparation with recreative flair.

Petrenko really does seem to have a way with large-scale, late-Romantic repertoire, and the present May 2009 account of Elgar's Second Symphony is nothing short of stunning in its cogent sweep, communicative ardour, emotional scope and entrancing ebb and flow. Indeed, Petrenko's empathy with this deeply personal music is infectious, and he persuades the Berliners to give of their considerable, golden-toned best: there are superlative contributions from the Principal Oboe and cello section in particular; plenty of smiles, too, from the players, who seem to be thoroughly enjoying the whole experience. For the concert's first half Petrenko is joined by pianist Lars Vogt for a memorable reading of Beethoven's Third Concerto – always

invigorating, supple and articulate, with some especially searching dialogue in the sublime slow movement.

Petrenko returned in December 2012 to direct a stimulating programme centred around two arresting compositions by Rudi Stephan (1887–1915), whose death while serving on the Galician Front aged only 28 was such a grievous loss to German music. Krakow-born Daniel Stabrawa (one of the BPO's three concertmasters) is a superb soloist in *Music for Violin and Orchestra* (1910), and both here and in *Music for Orchestra* (1912) Petrenko extracts every ounce of piercing beauty, bold drama and urgent expression from Stephan's compelling inspiration. The concert opens with Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* (another outstandingly sympathetic display, with the Rundfunkchor Berlin on eloquent form), and we go out on a genuine high with a performance of Scriabin's *The Poem of Ecstasy* that is utterly intoxicating in its voluptuousness, fragrant poetry and unflustered virtuosity; the headily resplendent closing minutes are properly transportive in their cumulative impact – they certainly left this listener airborne with exhilaration!

What a disarming talent Kirill Petrenko possesses – selfless, unassuming and, above all, musical to his fingertips. Let's hope we won't have to wait too much longer for further evidence of this nourishing partnership's combustible chemistry.

Andrew Achenbach

Available via various subscription packages, from seven days (€9.90) to 12 months (€149), at digitalconcerthall.com

Severance Hall, Cleveland & WCLV 104.9

Beethoven with Yefim Bronfman and The Cleveland Orchestra, January 9

Pianist Yefim Bronfman joins The Cleveland Orchestra for an all-Beethoven programme under the baton of the orchestra's Music Director, Franz Welser-Möst. Bronfman will be performing the Piano Concerto No 3 and also the *Choral Fantasy*, joined for the latter by The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus. Preceding these two works, the evening will begin with String Quartet No 15, Op 132, arranged for string

orchestra. The concert will be broadcast live on WCLV 104.9 ideastream, and then available for streaming for up to two weeks afterwards.

clevelandorchestra.com, tunein.com/radio/Cleveland-Orchestra-p750/

The Met, New York & cinemas worldwide

Bizet's Les Pêcheurs des Perles, January 16

This production of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* by Penny Woolcock was a co-production between ENO and The Met. If you missed the ENO stagings then here's another chance to

WATCH ONLINE

The Opera Platform - Puccini's one-act *Gianni Schicchi* directed by David Pountney at the Opéra de Lyon



Puccini

Gianni Schicchi never fails as a comedy, largely because the situation itself is funny. Buoso Donati has died, having disinherited his wheedling relatives. They seek help from wily Schicchi, who

impersonates Buoso to dictate his last will and testament...only to bag the prize plums for himself. Puccini's libretto is so detailed, it's difficult for a director to go wrong.

David Pountney's Lyon production isn't without its faults – the reading of Buoso's will lacks wit and Wolfgang Newerla's Marco minces around the stage – but the humour is still sharp. Zita (Natascha Petrinsky, far too young for a battleaxe) has a Zimmer frame decorated with a diamante cross, while Buoso's house contains oversized safes stuffed with packets of spaghetti. Among the heavily caricatured relatives, Paolo Battaglia's doddery Simone stands out.

A giant picture postcard of Florence serves as balcony, where Schicchi's daughter Lauretta (the lively Ivana Rusko) sunbathes. She's less innocent than some Laurettas and sips Champagne with Saimir Pirgu's charming, boyish Rinuccio, both in on Gianni's plot. Werner Van Mechelen's Schicchi is less lovable rogue than wily swindler. Gaetano d'Espinosa's Lyon Opéra Orchestra is on ebullient form. Pountney's production – subtitles in French only – is well worth an hour of your time. **Mark Pullinger**

Available, free to view, at theoperaplatform.eu until October 30, 2017

see it. Gianandrea Noseda conducts a cast featuring Diana Damrau as Leïla, Matthew Polenzani as Nadir, Mariusz Kwiecień as Zurga and Nicolas Testé as Nourabad.

metopera.org

Wigmore Hall, London & BBC Radio 3

Roderick Williams joins The Nash Ensemble, January 16 (live); January 18 (broadcast)

The Nash Ensemble are the Wigmore Hall's Chamber Ensemble in Residence. This evening's programme is entitled 'Mozart, Mendelssohn and the Italians' and opens with Boccherini's String Quintet in C major Op 28 No 4. Next come Mendelssohn songs with piano accompaniment, sung by baritone Roderick Williams. The concert finishes with Mozart's String Quintet, K516.

wigmore-hall.org.uk, bbc.co.uk/radio3

The Lighthouse, Poole & BBC Radio 3

Jean-Guihen Queyras joins the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, January 20

Under the baton of their Chief Conductor Kirill Karabits, the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra will perform Tchaikovsky's *Manfred Symphony*, and Dutilleux's *Tout un monde lointain* with Jean-Guihen Queyras (cello). The concert will be broadcast live on Radio 3 and then available to listen to online for 30 days.

bsolive.com, bbc.co.uk/radio3

Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Daniel Harding conducts German premiere of Lindberg's Violin Concerto No 2, January 23

Frank Peter Zimmermann is the soloist as Daniel Harding conducts the German premiere of Magnus Lindberg's Second Violin Concerto (Zimmermann performed the world

premiere with the LPO in December). The other soloist of the evening is flautist Emmanuel Pahud in Pierre Boulez's *Mémoriale (explosante-fixe..Originel)*. The concert also features Berlioz's *Corsaire* Overture, and Schumann's Symphony No 2.

digitalconcerthall.com

Royal Festival Hall & BBC Radio 3

Vladimir Jurowski conducts Bruckner's Symphony No 3, January 27

Jurowski's exploration of Bruckner's symphonies with the LPO continues with Symphony No 3, alongside Schnittke's *Pianissimo*, and Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No 2 with soloist Natalia Gutman. The concert will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 and then available afterwards on the BBC iPlayer.

lpo.org.uk / bbc.co.uk/radio3

WATCH ONLINE

Digital Theatre - Sir John Eliot Gardiner conducts the LSO in Mendelssohn and Schumann



Mendelssohn • Schumann

John Eliot Gardiner and the LSO have developed a musical rapport that has provided some of London's more exciting performances over the past few years. A Beethoven cycle, where both parties met halfway to thrilling effect, has now been followed by an exploration

of Mendelssohn's symphonic music. This concert, recorded at the Barbican in London in January 2014, opens with the *Hebrides* Overture and closes with the Third Symphony, the *Scottish* – making a nicely north-of-the-border pair of bookends. In between comes a performance of the Schumann Piano Concerto played with winning poetry by Maria João Pires. The programme has already been released by LSO Live and received an Editor's Choice in these pages exactly a year ago for its Hybrid SACD release.

Gardiner has cultivated a very particular LSO sound and it works beautifully in these three pieces – there's a lightness and airiness that's even more appealing than Abbado's Mendelssohn

with the same orchestra. It's particularly noticeable in fast passages where these players dance along on the tips of their toes. In the symphony, Gardiner has the upper strings stand and it definitely energises the playing.

The camerawork, in the modern style, is quite busy: you rarely get a single shot that lasts for more than a few seconds (in the opening pages of the concerto, we dart around the orchestra cutting back and forth to Pires). But it's been well done and works well with the music, and the picture quality is very impressive (you even get a good view of Pires's dolphin tattoo on her right wrist!).

James Jolly

Available to rent for 48 hours (£3.99) or buy (£8.99; HD £10.99) from digitaltheatre.com



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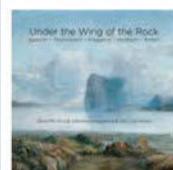
● THE TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES THE MOST OF YOUR MUSIC ●



This month, Denon's whole-house audio system, an ultra-compact audiophile DAC/headphone amplifier and the best of a year's hi-fi.

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

JANUARY TEST DISCS



Viola soloist Soon-Mi Chung is beautifully captured in this set of British and Norwegian music, another of those atmospheric 2L recordings.



A sparkling live set from Martha Argerich, recorded at the 2014 Lugano Festival, with excellent presence and ambience in the 24-bit/44.1kHz version.

The future is digital – or maybe analogue

From DSD-capable DACs to digital speakers and new turntables, the latest arrivals have something for all



Putting plenty of digital processing power in your pocket is nothing new. After all, today's smartphones are real do-everything devices. However, the audio industry is catching up and bringing better sound for mobile listeners. The latest arrival is the tiny Mojo digital-to-analogue converter and headphone amplifier from British company Chord Electronics. Selling for £399 ①, this pocketable powerhouse uses a version of the technology used in Chord's rather more expensive Hugo and Hugo TT DACs, and promises very similar sound quality. Read the full review on page 118 to find out whether it delivers.

Designed for home use is the Korg DS-DAC-10R ②, although it can be powered directly from a computer. It's not much more expensive than the Chord, at £439, but its star feature is that, as well as acting as a DAC compatible with formats all the way up to DSD128/5.6MHz, it has a built-in phono stage to which a turntable can be connected, and can convert vinyl records to DSD128 digital files when used with the company's partnering AudioGate 4 software. It's also possible to use the analogue input for standard line sources, and the Korg can also digitise into PCM formats – and, of course, DSD64. It's in the shops this month.

At the other end of the digital chain are two new speaker models from Meridian, able to take a direct digital signal or integrate into a multiroom system. The £6000 DSP5200.2 and £17,000 DSP7200.2 speaker ③ have onboard digital signal processing allowing features such as the company's Enhanced Bass Alignment and controls for bass, treble tilt, listening axis, volume, time-compensated balance and absolute phase, along with three 75W channels of amplification. They can be used with the company's Media Source 200 (£499) to give wireless access to network music libraries, controlled by a phone/tablet app, and can also integrate with the Sooloos music library system. They're available in high-gloss white or black as standard, with a wide range of additional colours available at a five per cent premium via Meridian's Select service.

Coming back to analogue, Pro-ject has launched two new turntables featuring its resonance-damping carbon fibre technology. The £1500 RPM 9 Carbon and flagship RPM 10 Carbon, at £2300 ④, both use the company's vestigial 'teardrop' chassis, with a machined MDF plinth packed with resin-coated steel pellets, then topped with the carbon fibre surface coating. The RPM 9 Carbon uses an aluminium platter lined with damping material and topped with vinyl, and is belt-driven with 33/45rpm speed

switching. It uses the popular 9CC 9in tone arm and is also available with an Ortofon Quintet cartridge fitted at a £400 premium. The RPM 10 Carbon has a platter of similar construction, this time derived from the Xtension 10 turntable, while the arm is the 10CC Evolution model. The turntable is supplied complete with Pro-ject's new Ground-IT Carbon high-mass platform and can also be bought with the Ortofon Cadenza Black cartridge pre-installed for an extra £1000.

Finally, a new flagship amplifier from Italian company Unico, the £4000 150 dual-mono integrated ⑤, using a hybrid of valve and solid-state technology. A ground-up design to replace the Unico 100, the new amplifier is hand-built and has three line and two XLR balanced inputs, and speaker terminals designed to simplify biwiring-suitable speakers. As the model designation suggests, this is a 150W-per-channel design, with the gain provided by two valve stages: the input section uses two ECC83 triodes while the driver section has two 6H30s. A passive ALPS volume control is also used. The MOSFET power stage is designed to reach optimum linearity in just 10 minutes and to be able to drive a wide range of speakers. Supplied with a remote control, the Unico 150 is now available in silver, with a black version to special order at a £100 premium. ⑥

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

HEOS by Denon

A well-integrated range of products makes this an attractive wireless multiroom system



HEOS BY DENON

Wireless multiroom system

Inputs USB, line audio, Wi-Fi, Ethernet, Bluetooth (via add-on 'dongle'); HomeCinema soundbar also has HDMI and optical digital inputs; HEOS Link and HEOS Amp have optical digital input

Outputs One pair of speakers, subwoofer (Amp); Fixed/variable line outs, optical/coaxial digital, subwoofer (Link)

Drive units One tweeter, one woofer (HEOS 1); two full-range (3); two tweeters, two woofers and passive radiator (5); two tweeters, two woofers and subwoofer with twin passive radiators (7); two tweeters, two woofers and a subwoofer (HomeCinema)

Amplification All speakers have a digital amplifier for each drive unit; HEOS Amp has 2x100W (max) output

Accessories supplied Ethernet cable, audio/set-up cable, power supply

Finishes available Black, white (all speaker models)

Dimensions (HxWxD) 18.9x12.9x12.8cm (HEOS 1); 27.2x13x16.5cm (3, used vertically); 20.9x29.4x16.6cm (5); 20.3x47.9x16.4cm (7); 8.2x101.7x94cm (HomeCinema soundbar); 9.3x22.1x 21.4cm (Amp); 7.4x15.5mmx15cm (Link)

denon.co.uk/uk/heos

sectors of the home-entertainment market still showing appreciable growth.

So what exactly is a wireless multiroom system, and what can it do for you? To find out, I ordered up a representative cross-section of the HEOS system for some exploration and experimentation.

At its most basic, a system such as HEOS 'does just what it says on the tin'. Starting a HEOS multiroom system involves no more than one HEOS speaker, the company's control app on a smartphone or tablet (Apple iOS or Android) and the cable supplied in the box to link the two for the set-up process. Click 'Set up' on the app, connect the cable, choose a name for the speaker you're setting up from a list ('Lounge', 'Kitchen', etc), and enter the password for your home Wi-Fi network. When prompted, unplug the cable, and you're done – you just repeat for each extra speaker you add or, if you're using the optional Ethernet cabled connection (for which a cable is supplied), extra speakers are detected automatically.

Multiple speakers can be grouped, and it's possible to have every speaker in the home playing something different, all the same or anything in between, with local volume control whether via buttons on each speaker – there's also a mute button – or via the control app. Speakers can be paired for stereo sound from the HEOS 1 or HEOS 3, both of which are mono designs, or a more expansive sound from the stereo HEOS 5 and 7 models, and up to 32 speakers can be used at once on a HEOS system.

All the speakers are mains-powered, in common with most wireless multiroom designs of this kind, but the smallest and

flat we've seen an explosion in the range of wireless multiroom speaker systems. It's not hard to see why – the success of Sonos over the past decade has been a wake-up call for the established home audio industry, with research showing that once someone buys into the brand, they don't just stick with it for future purchases but also make those purchases relatively rapidly. That explains the fact that recently all kinds of brands have jumped on the multiroom bandwagon, from established

consumer electronics names including LG, Panasonic, Samsung and Sony to a number of new arrivals and start-ups such as Bluesound (from the same stable as NAD) and British company Musaic.

Denon was one of the first to show its hand with the arrival of its HEOS system: parent company D+M Group built its entire 2014 dealer conference around the launch of what's intended as a new sub-brand – it's 'HEOS by Denon', not 'Denon HEOS' – and stressing the importance it placed on getting in on one of the few

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The beauty of the HEOS system is its ability to distribute music around the home. These will help...

NAS SYNOLOGY

You can stream from a computer but a NAS drive such as this Synology will offer 'always on' convenience and huge storage capacity.



APPLE iPAD MINI

A smartphone will let you 'drive' the HEOS but a small tablet such as the Apple iPad Mini offers a much clearer control interface.



most affordable, the HEOS 1, can be used with an optional GoPack for portable use in the house, in the garden or even in environments where mains power wouldn't be safe, such as the bathroom. The GoPack attaches to the base of the HEOS 1 using a bayonet fitting, and contains a lithium-ion battery good for six hours' use between charges. Also included is a USB adapter with an integral splashguard to cover the connections to the rear of the speaker.

The HEOS 1 has a sealed design for use in inclement environments and sells for

Multiple speakers can be grouped, and it's possible to have every speaker in the home playing something different

£199, with the GoPack an extra £79. It uses separate mid/bass and treble drivers, powered by the digital amplification found throughout the range. The larger HEOS 3, at £249, uses two full-range drivers and is designed for use either vertically or horizontally, allowing it to be squeezed into very tight spaces, while the HEOS 5, at £349, ups the ante with a full stereo design, using two tweeters and two mid/bass drivers, powered by four digital amps, and a passive bass radiator.

The flagship one-box speaker in the range is the £499 HEOS 7, which adds an integral subwoofer powered by its own digital amplifier and tuned with two passive radiators, while the speaker line-up is completed with the HEOS HomeCinema at £599. This 'soundbar' speaker is designed for connection to a TV or video sources (as well as being usable as a HEOS music 'zone'), has built-in virtual surround decoding and processing, and comes complete with a separate wireless subwoofer.

Completing the line-up are two units designed to integrate HEOS with existing systems. The £299 HEOS Link has line outputs to connect to any amplifier, receiver or system. As well as turning the connected device into a HEOS zone, it can also control connected Denon components, while the £399 HEOS Amp has built-in

amplification and so can be used with any pair of conventional speakers.

PERFORMANCE

Once set up, you choose how you want to listen to music via an app screen. As well as the ability to play from a home computer or NAS storage via the UPnP protocol, the speakers can access internet radio via the Tunein service, and streaming music services such as Spotify, Deezer, Napster, Soundcloud and Tidal, depending on which subscriptions the user has. It's also possible to connect local sources via the line-in and USB sockets on the speakers and share what's playing from them with other HEOS speakers, and there's also an optional Bluetooth 'dongle' designed to connect to the USB socket on all the speakers and receive content that way.

All the speakers support audio at up to 48kHz – high-resolution is currently not available – but whether you use a single HEOS 1, pair two up for stereo or start straight away with one of the all-in-one stereo speakers, what's immediately apparent is just how enjoyable is the sound the system delivers. I've spent some weeks with the range of speakers I was sent dotted around the house, and it's soon become second nature to carry my phone or a small tablet around with me and just select speakers as I go – not least because it makes it possible to get on with one's life without missing any of a concert or radio play – and with the HEOS Link connected into my main system it's easy to switch the sound to that as soon as I 'settle' for a while.

Even better is the lack of dropouts and latency in the system, meaning that with speakers on in adjacent rooms, there's none of that annoying 'echo' effect. What's more, with the larger HEOS 5 and 7 speakers there's a fine combination of clarity and power on offer, to the point that one soon forgets one is listening to sound coming from a single speaker, even when listening to large-scale works played at high levels.

So where does one begin? Well, if you have an existing audio system and want to start exploring multiroom and streaming services, the HEOS Link must surely be the way to go, while those without an audio system could just begin with the HEOS 1

Or you could try...

Play:5 speaker

The obvious rival for the HEOS system is the well-established



Sonos range. It's been with us for over a decade and has developed from a couple of amplifier devices driven by a dedicated controller into a complete range of speakers encompassing both hi-fi and home cinema, all able to be controlled from a standard smartphone or tablet. The latest arrival is the all-new Play:5 speaker, featuring upgraded drivers and amplification, and the company's Trueplay room-tuning technology, designed to optimise the sound of a Sonos speaker for the space in which it's being used.

More details at sonos.com

Bluesound



A more recent arrival on the multiroom scene is the Bluesound range, developed by the company behind NAD electronics and PSB loudspeakers. Drawing on the technology of those ranges, and adding the ability to stream high-resolution audio, Bluesound is an end-to-end solution, from the Vault CD ripper/server through to the Pulse speakers and Node clients, available with or without inbuilt amplification, for use into a hi-fi system or directly to speakers. The range has recently been relaunched in Mk2 guise, with an expanded range of speakers and new compact Node models. Full information is available at bluesound.com

and GoPack, using it as a Bluetooth speaker for a phone or tablet and building from there. But I'm willing to guess that anyone who tries this simple, elegant and fine-sounding range is soon likely to become a regular customer of their local HEOS retailer. **G**

● REVIEW CHORD MOJO

Chord creates a little sister for Hugo

Pocket-sized DAC/headphone amplifier is a go-anywhere bargain

Listen to Chord Electronics owner John Franks and you get the impression that the new Mojo, the company's smallest digital-to-analogue converter/headphone amplifier to date, is actually a very big thing. He's done his sums, knows the size of the global market for smartphones, and he says: 'Half the people in the world have smartphones – that's 3.5bn people. If we achieve just 0.0001 per cent market penetration, that's 350,000 Mojos a year.'

Chord has great ambitions for this, its least expensive model at £399. It's already seen what can be done with its previous portable DAC/amp, the £1400 Hugo, and spun that off into the £3000 Hugo TT (tabletop) model as it became clear that a lot of users were keeping the Hugo connected to their main hi-fi system.

Clearly corners have been shaved in cutting the tiny Mojo down to its price, yes? Not quite: the new product may be entirely pocketable, powered (like the previous models) from internal batteries and designed for the smartphone user but it's still built the same way as other Chord products. That means it's designed and built in the UK by the Kent-based company, cased in a housing milled from a single block of aluminium and conceived around the company's unique digital-to-analogue conversion software, the work of celebrated digital designer Rob Watts.

Unlike conventional DACs, the Chord products aren't built around 'off the shelf' converter chips. Instead, a Field Programmable Gate Array (or FPGA), which is an integrated circuit able to be programmed by the designer, runs custom Watts-written software to handle the conversion duties. That enables it to handle file formats from MP3 all the way up to 768kHz ultra-high resolution, as well as DSD right up to DSD512, which is way beyond what's currently available commercially from the music labels. And it can do so with a computer, a tablet or a smartphone: connected via a USB cable and Apple's 'camera connection' Lightning-to-USB adapter, and with a third-party app such as Onkyo's HF Player (with its £7.99 HD upgrade) loaded on an iPhone or iPad, you can store and play just about every commercially available 'hi-res' format.

You can also use it with conventional digital sources, as it has both optical and

electrical digital inputs – for example for use with CD players and the like – and can also be set to give a fixed-level output to feed a normal stereo amplifier's line-ins. The electrical digital and audio outputs – for two pairs of headphones – are both on 3.5mm sockets, so some adaptors will be needed to connect to a CD player, for example, or feed audio out to an amplifier. However, Chord is planning a series of little adaptors to fit on the end of the Mojo and offer extra connectivity: one will tidy connection when used with iPhones and the like, another will accept memory cards for direct playback, and others are on the way offering Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connectivity.

Charging of the internal battery takes around four hours and is good for 10 hours'

The power available could lead to some embarrassing 'bus conducting' moments if you get too carried away

use, and separate microUSB sockets are provided for charging and signal, so it's possible to replenish the battery using a standard USB charger (not provided) while listening via the signal input. By the way, the battery – and therefore the whole unit – intentionally runs warm when charging or playing.

Operation is simple, with three ball-shaped controls along one edge of the housing: press and hold the single one and the Mojo powers up; do so while holding the other two controls and it powers up in fixed-level mode for use with an external amplifier. The two balls control volume up/down, changing colour to show the settings in use, and have extra-fine adjustment at the top and bottom of the volume range; the 'power ball' illuminates to show a digital signal is being received and changes colour to identify the signal in use.

PERFORMANCE

Having used the Mojo both in my home system and with my iPhone – and overlapping the review period with an audition of Chord's Hugo TT – I'm concerned. The problem is that the Mojo is so good that I can't help but fear it will impact upon sales of the Hugo, if not perhaps the TT version. For just as the 'portable' Hugo has found its way into many



CHORD MOJO

Type DAC/headphone amplifier

Price £399

Inputs USBs for signal and charging, optical/electrical digital

Outputs 2x3.5mm stereo headphone, with fixed level option

File formats 32kHz-768kHz PCM, DSD2.8MHz-11.2MHz

Accessories supplied USB cable

Dimensions (WxHxD) 8.2x2.2x6cm

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a home-based system, so the Mojo gets very close to Hugo levels of performance for a fraction of the cost. That makes it a pretty compelling buy: I was constantly surprised at just how well it can drive headphones from the smallest in-ear design all the way up to large over-ear models you probably wouldn't use on the move, how obvious it makes the gains in space and detail when moving up from CD quality to 'hi-res formats', and how mature and involving is the sound available from a box small enough to fit in any pocket.

Operation becomes intuitive within a few minutes of first using the Mojo, although until the dedicated adaptor arrives – which it should by the time you read this – using the Chord with the iPhone camera adaptor and an addition USB cable is a little inelegant. However, it does the job, and would make a fine combination for those who travel a lot and don't want to carry an additional digital audio player.

With delicate solo or chamber music, the sheer refinement on offer here, and the way the sound emerges from a silent background, is just about ideal, while the power and dynamics available for orchestral music could lead to some embarrassing 'bus conducting' moments if you get too carried away.

As I mentioned, Chord is clearly looking for volume sales of this little DAC to make its economics work. On this showing, I really don't think it need have any worries in that regard. ☺

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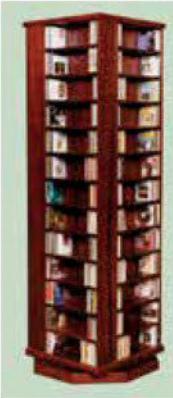


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ESSAY

How the audio industry keeps on reinventing itself

For all the doom-laden predictions that hi-fi is on its last legs, the past year has seen a remarkable range of exciting new products



Clockwise from top:
Technics C700, Naim
NAC-N 272, Marantz
HD-DAC1, Arcam A49
and Onkyo A-9010(UK)

Hardly a month seems to go by for me without reading somewhere that hi-fi is a thing of the past, overtaken by music streamed to smartphones and tablets and listened to using tiny ear-bud headphones. We're told that no one's buying big, old-fashioned amplifier, speakers, players and the like – in fact, no one's actually buying music anymore, but rather just summoning it up on demand as the fancy takes them.

That's not the impression I'm getting when I talk to some of the UK's leading manufacturers. Instead I hear of product demand exceeding supply, of new ranges having many months of production capacity snapped up by distributors and retailers worldwide even before they're revealed to the public, and of even big-ticket models startling their manufacturers by attracting so many buyers. If that's an industry in decline, then I am sure many others would love to be in so perilous a situation!

Both in these pages and elsewhere, I've enjoyed listening to some remarkable products in the past 12 months, and have had the usual rather pleasant problem of trying to fit as many of them as possible into the limited space I have available. Some have been missed, for which I apologise, and more are lined up for the coming months – the only problem is that really exciting products just keep on being launched.

For example, in recent months I have attended the launches of some remarkable

loudspeakers, including the reinvented Bowers & Wilkins 800 Series Diamond models, now being made in an equally redeveloped factory down in Worthing, and the massively ambitious – and hugely clever – Bang & Olufsen BeoLab 90, complete with 18 drive units, 18 amplifiers totalling 8200W and a massive amount of processing power on board.

Surely everything there is to be done with loudspeakers happened many years ago? Seems not...

Those are just some examples of what's happening at the upper end of the market, and in a sector many would suggest is just about the definition of a mature technology. Surely everything there is to be done with loudspeakers happened many years ago? Seems not...

Meanwhile, down at the lower end – and yes, with an eye to those buyers storing, streaming and playing their music on smartphones and tablets – there's the arrival of the really rather magical little Chord Mojo digital-to-analogue converter/headphone amplifier, selling for a very affordable £399. It draws on the innovative technology of the company's rather more expensive digital products and, as I suggest in the review on page 118, doesn't just set new standards at its price but also challenges its pricier stablemates. And

all this in a product designed and made in Britain, and about the size of a pack of cards. That's the British hi-fi industry at its best.

So, too, is the beautifully integrated **Naim** NAC-N 272, combining the functions of a network audio player and a high-quality pre-amplifier. I was never a great fan of Naim's first product along these lines, the NAC-N 172, feeling it might have been a compromise too far; but with the 272 the company has managed to create a product that's a master of all trades, not a jack, and also integrated higher-resolution audio in the form of DSD64 – a feature now trickled up, down and sideways into its other ND-series network players. With both Spotify Connect and Tidal integration on board, and demonstrating Naim's rapid response to the much-discussed BBC radio shenanigans of 2015, the 272 is not surprisingly proving a big hit for the company.

Also attracting a lot of interest is the budget **Onkyo** A-9010(UK) amplifier, a return to the days when Japanese companies made 'UK-tuned' versions of existing models. Shorn of the standard amplifier's digital inputs and with selected components used to enhance performance, the Onkyo proves that just £200 can still buy you an excellent amplifier with more than a taste of audiophile ability.

Another Japanese brand taking the hi-fi market seriously is **Technics**, and 2015 was the year its first ranges finally hit the shops after an extended hiatus. The flagship R1 line-up is mightily impressive, as it should be given pricing placing it at the very esoteric end of the market, but the C700 system of network player, integrated amplifier and speakers put in a fine showing in the March issue.

The previous month saw the **Marantz** HD-DAC1 taking centre stage and emphasising how seriously the headphone market is taken these days. A desktop DAC/amplifier, it combines elements of the company's classic design with the means to drive even high-end headphones with ease.

Arcam's A49 was a another impressive 2015 debutant, designed in the UK but made in the USA. If you're looking for an all-analogue amplifier that can pack a massive punch, it's a perfect choice. **G**

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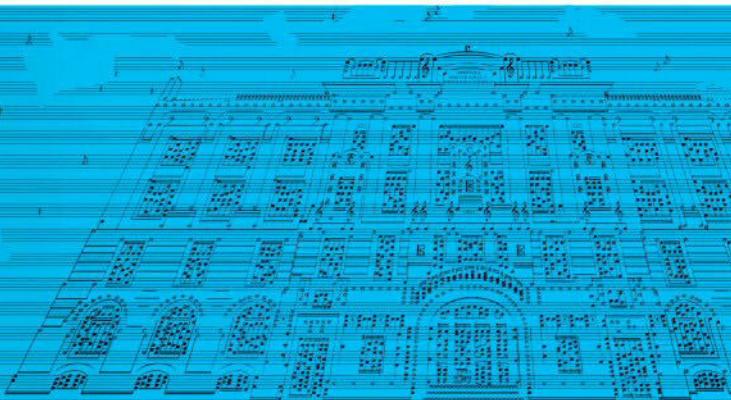
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NOTES & LETTERS

Bach's 'B minor madrigal' · Manfred Honeck · Carl Maria von Weber's neglect

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Bach, Gardiner and choirs

With the old 'B minor madrigal' jibe – always good for a snigger – John Eliot Gardiner (November, page 11) seeks to dismiss the central role of a one-to-a-part choir in Bach's church music: 'I don't think there's any evidence for it.' In reality, Gardiner knows full well that there is enough positive evidence to have filled a decent-sized book, and is therefore probably frustrated at the continuing lack of plausible contradictory evidence or coherent counter-argument from scholarly colleagues.

While 'determined to "get it right" back then', Gardiner now claims not to 'feel the same pressure'. Fair enough; no performer is obliged to be 'historically informed'. His recent comments, however, clearly invite the innocent Bach lover to rest content with the impression that today's conventional choral set-up is just as 'historically informed' as its associated period-instrument orchestra is expected to be. Unfortunately, it isn't.

A hypothetical large-scale performance of the Mass in B minor in Bach's Germany could well have involved as many as 33 or so instrumentalists (as in Gardiner's recording), yet the associated vocal forces are certain to have been considerably smaller, even for the grandest of occasions: at Wittenberg in 1755 a band of exactly 33 was paired with a total of eight singers, and a similar one at Stadtilm in 1742 with 12 (grouped as quartets). These, moreover, are the very highest reliable and relevant figures we have – compared to which Gardiner's 35-strong choir appears positively gargantuan.

Why such a discrepancy? In contrast to other choral repertoires, concerted vocal music was essentially the province of solo singers (concertists). Positioned 'out front', they were responsible not just for solo movements but for all choruses as well. As a team they constituted a 'choir' – indeed the choir. Subsidiary singers (ripienists) might sometimes be added but were an entirely optional element; rarely any more numerous than the handful of principal singers, they would have been stationed separately (with special copies) and given a limited role, reinforcing the other voices only in particular types of choral writing. Over time these ripieno groups grew in

Letter of the Month



Lang Lang signs a CD for a delighted fan

Autographs – a disappearing collectable?

In this age of downloads, I'm struck by how an aspect of collecting will disappear, namely asking artists to autograph a CD. As a teenager I thought this most 'uncool' but as I reach, and am rapidly surpassing, middle age I find I'm more eager to collect autographed CDs and have amassed a collection of signed discs as well as lovely memories.

Artists such as Cecilia Bartoli, Anne-Sophie Mutter and Sir Andrew Davis have willingly signed the booklets I have thrust at them and have always been willing to chat for a moment or two. We classical music lovers are most fortunate in that our favoured musicians are so accommodating – imagine trying to meet Jagger, Bowie or Beyoncé!

Robert Roy, Edinburgh

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the February issue by January 9. *Gramophone* reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

size and importance, eventually wresting full responsibility for all choruses from the 'principal' voices and acquiring a distinct compositional status, to form the basis of the 'oratorio' tradition of performance we have inherited. (Gardiner's more recent practice of 'having the [solo] singers emerge from the *tutti* and then go back' has very little to do with the 18th century but does at least avoid the curious spectacle of underworked soloists sitting out so-called '*tutti*' sections.)

These matters may not interest or suit all who wish to engage with Bach's

music today: 'I don't think there's any great merit in doing it that way,' opines Gardiner. But it is surely something else to pretend that those performance principles never existed.

*Andrew Parrott
Oxford*

Viola to podium

Richard Osborne (Beethoven symphony review, December, page 45) mentions that Manfred Honeck was in the second violins of the Vienna Philharmonic. Although he started on the violin as a child, sources I

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have found on the internet state that he subsequently transferred to the viola and was in the viola section of the orchestra for approaching 10 years. (His brother Rainer is of course one of their four concertmasters.) I'm sure you would agree that as a viola player turned conductor he is following in some pretty exalted company: Pierre Monteux and Carlo Maria Giulini to name but two!

*Andrew Condon
Crowborough, E Sussex*

Neglecting Weber

I was delighted to read Jeremy Nicholas's article on Weber's *Konzerstück* in November (page 102). I am amazed at how we have let Weber's music all

but disappear from our concert halls and recital rooms. Standing at the forefront of the Romantic age, many of his successors acknowledged his genius and his influence on their music. Were they wrong, or are we denying ourselves chances to enjoy the wide range of Weber's colourful, expertly written and supremely enjoyable music?

*Barry Collett
Oakham, Rutland*

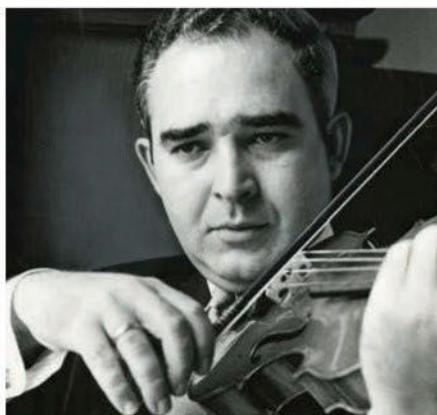
Lookalikes?

Looking at the picture of Mravinsky in November (page 99) is it possible that he and Furtwängler were brothers separated at birth?

Rev Brian Gardner, via email

OBITUARY

The Boston Symphony's admired Concertmaster



JOSEPH SILVERSTEIN

Violinist and conductor

Born March 21, 1932

Died November 22, 2015

The Boston Symphony Orchestra's one-time Concertmaster has died aged 83. Born in Detroit, Silverstein studied first with his father, a music teacher, and then entered the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia where he was a pupil of Efrem Zimbalist, and also of William Primrose, Josef Gingold and Mischa Mischakoff.

After winning a number of competitions (1959 Queen Elizabeth Competition – silver medal; Naumberg Award in 1960), Silverstein played in the Houston Symphony, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Denver Symphony Orchestra before joining the Boston Symphony Orchestra, ascending to become its Concertmaster in 1962 during the last year of Charles Munch's conductorship. In the subsequent years, he led the orchestra during the tenures of Erich Leinsdorf, William Steinberg and Seiji Ozawa, before

stepping down in 1984. He was held in high regard by the numerous conductors who guested with the Boston SO and many have paid tribute to his style and artistry.

Steinberg was also a conductor, holding the roles of Assistant Conductor of the Boston SO from 1971, Music Director of the Utah SO from 1983 to 1998, acting Music Director of the Florida PO in 2011 and Artistic Adviser to the Portland SO for the 2007–08 season. He also held teaching positions at Curtis and the New England Conservatory in Boston.

Silverstein's style was characterized by a sweet tone and an elegance of delivery that can be heard on numerous Boston SO recordings, notably Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Ein Heldenleben* (Philips), Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* (Telarc), both under Ozawa, as well the Debussy Violin Sonata with Michael Tilson Thomas at the piano (DG). Early in his Boston career he recorded the Bartók Second Violin Concerto and Stravinsky Violin Concerto with Leinsdorf, prompting Edward Greenfield (April 1966) to comment that 'he gives strong, clean-cut performance of both concertos that rival and in some ways outshine the others we have on record'.

With the Utah Symphony, combining the roles of soloist and conductor, he made a series of concerto recordings for ProArte that included works by Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Barber. In 1998, he joined a stellar group – Jaime Laredo, Yo-Yo Ma and Leon Fleisher for Korngold's Suite (Sony Classical). As a conductor he can also be heard in a disc of Clara Schumann concertos (Tudor).

NEXT MONTH FEBRUARY 2016



The vinyl revival

Andrew Mellor investigates the rejuvenation of interest in vinyl recordings and talks to representatives from across the record industry about this growing area of the music market

Haydn symphonies

Richard Wigmore looks back over the pioneering historically-informed Haydn symphony series made by the L'Oiseau-Lyre label – and now completed by Ottavio Dantone

Tasmin Little on Beethoven

As Tasmin Little records Beethoven's complete violin sonatas for Chandos, Charlotte Gardner speaks to her about what makes these pieces so special

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Debussy Pf Wks (pp2015). *Dalberto.* Ⓛ **AP111**
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REVIEWS INDEX

A	
Albéniz/Godowsky	
Tango	65
Triana	65
B	
Babadjanian	
Six Pictures	55
Bach, CPE	
Hamburg Sonata	56
Bach, JC	
Sonata notturna	57
Bach, WF	
Allegro e forte, Falck43	26
Keyboard Concertos – Falck41; Falck43; Falck45	26
Sinfonia, Falck67	26
Bagdasaryan	
Nocturne	55
Rhapsody	55
Bartók	
Complete Choral Works	83
Violin Concerto No 1, Sz36	27
Beethoven	
Complete Works for Cello & Piano	24
Piano Sonatas – No 21, 'Waldstein'; No 29, 'Hammerklavier'	60
Romance, Op 50	26
Rondo in B flat major, WoO6	97
Violin Sonata No 1	97
Symphonies – Nos 2 & 7	26
Berg	
Violin Concerto	26
Bishop	
Home, Sweet Home	65
Bizet	
Adagietto	65
Böhm	
Keyboard Capriccio in D minor	56
Boyvin	
Cornet ou Tierce	74
Dialogue de récits et de trios	74
Dialogue en fugue	74
Duo	74
Grand Prélude	74
Tierce en taille	74
Trio	74
Brahms	
Academic Festival Overture, Op 80	DVD 28
Piano Concertos – Nos 1 & 2	DVD 28
String Quintet No 2, Op 111	27, 48
Symphonies – Nos 1-4	DVD 28
Tragic Overture, Op 81	DVD 28
Variations on a Theme by Haydn, 'St Antoni Chorale', Op 56a	DVD 28
Violin Concerto	27, 28
Violin Sonata No 1	97
Bruch	
Romance, Op 42	29
Serenade, Op 75	29
Violin Concerto No 1	29
Cage	
27'10.5554"	61
Child of Tree	61
Dream	60
ear for EAR (Antiphonies)	74
Five	74
Four	74
In a Landscape	74
In the Name of the Holocaust	60
Inlets	61
The Perilous Night	60
Primitive	60
Soliloquy	60
Tossed as it is Untroubled	60
Two Composed Improvisations	61
Two Pieces	60
Variations I	61
Charpentier, M-A	
Ave verum corpus, H329	74
De profundis, H232	74
Domine Dominus noster, H163	74
Gaudia Beatae Virginis Mariae, H330	74
Pour un reposoir, H523	74
Quam dilecta, H186	74
Usquequo Domine, H196	74
Chopin	
Arrangement du concert du Rondo, Op 16	65
Barcarolle, Op 60	61
Berceuse, Op 57	61
Mazurkas – No 7, Op 7 No 3; No 41, Op 63 No 3	71
Polonaise No 5, Op 44	61
Preludes, Op 28	61
Scherzo No 1, Op 20	71
Chausson	
La chanson bien douce	74
Le temps des lilas	74
Sept Mélodies, Op 2	74
Copland	
Billy the Kid	29
An Outdoor Overture	29
Rodeo	29
El Salón México	29
Cowell	
Aeolian Harp	60
Amiable Conversation	60
Sinister Resonance	60
The Banshee	60
The Snow of Fuji Yama	60
Three Irish Legends	60
Vestiges	60
D	
Debussy	
Fantaisie	31
Violin Sonata	97
Dett	
Complete Piano Works	63
Doderer	
Symphony No 2, 'Bohin'	34
Violin Concerto No 2, 'In Breath of Time'	34
Duparc	
Au pays où se fait la guerre	74
Chanson triste	74
L'invitation au voyage	74
Phidylé	74
Romance de Mignon	74
Dutilleux	
La fille du diable – excerpts	34
Le Loup	34
Quatre Mélodies	34
Trois Sonnets de Jean Cassou	34
Trois Tableaux symphoniques	34
Dvořák	
Rusalka	DVD 89
String Quintet No 3, 'American', Op 97 B180	48
E	
Eggert, JN	
Symphonies – Nos 1-4	43
Ernst	
Gran Caprice, Op 26	57
The Last Rose of Summer	57
F	
Feldman	
Rothko Chapel	74
Fauré	
Ballade, Op 19	31
Fuchs	
Nine Fantasy Pieces	26
G	
Gade	
Piano Trio, Op 42	54
Piano Trio Movement	54
Gernsheim	
Fantasiestück, Op 33	34
Violin Concertos – Nos 1 & 2	34
Godowsky	
Six Pieces for the Left Hand Alone	65
Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes by Johann Strauss II – No 2, Die Fledermaus	65
Gudmundsen-Holmgreen	
Moments musicaux	54
H	
Hahn	
A Chloris	74
Etudes Latines – Néère; Lydé;	60
I	
Tyndaris; Pholoé; Phyllis	74
Le printemps	74
Le rossignol des lilas	74
Quand je fus pris au pavillon	74
Trois jours de vendange	74
Lehár	
The Merry Widow	DVD 89
Leroux	
Cinq Poèmes de Jean Grosjean	78
Quid sit musicus?	78
Lima	
Eneo in Tracia – Sinfonia	86
La vera costanza – Sinfonia	86
Lo spirito di contraddizione – Sinfonia	86
Teséo – excerpts	86
Liszt	
Bénédiction de Dieu	64
Berceuse	64
Five Concert Etudes	64
Four Mephisto Waltzes	64
Four Waltzes	64
Harmonies poétiques et religieuses, S173	65
Hungarian Rhapsody No 10	64
Impromptu brillant sur des thèmes de Rossini et Spontini	64
Mephisto Waltz No 1	71
Piano Sonata in B minor	64
Rienzi Fantasy	64
Sept Variations brillantes sur un thème de Rossini	64
Six Consolations	64
Six Paganini Etudes	64
Soirée de Vienne, S427 No 6	71
Soirées musicales de Rossini	64
Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, S161 No 5	71
Spinnerlied from Der fliegende Holländer	64
St François de Paule marchant sur les flots	64
Three Liebersträume	64
Trois Odes funèbres, S112 – No 1, Les morts: Oraison; No 2, La note	35
Two Ballades	64
Two Légendes	64
Two Polonoises	64
Vexilla regis prodeunt, S185	35
Liszt/Schubert	
Divertissement à la hongroise, D818	
Lalo	
Piano Trios – Nos 1-3	48
Lange-Müller	
Piano Trio, Op 53	54
Langgaard	
Fjeldblomster (Mountain Flowers)	54
Larsson	
Barococo, Op 64	35
Symphony No 2, Op 17	35
Variations, Op 50	35
Leclair	
Scylla et Glaucus – Air des démons	45
Ma fin est mon commencement	78
Sans cuer	78
M	
Machaut	
Inviolata genitrix	78
Violante genitrix	78

Magnard		Wind Quintet	96	Schumann		Stebelt		Weichlein, R	
Chant funèbre, Op 9	43	Nielsen, SH		Arabeske, Op 18	71	Piano Concertos – No 3, 'L'orage', Op 33; No 5, 'A la chasse', Op 64;		Sonatas, Op 1	56
Mahler		Divertimento	54	Dichterliebe – Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'	71	No 7, 'Grand concerto militaire'	41	Weigl	
Blumine	36	Nørholm		Introduction and Allegro appassionato, Op 92	39	The Last Waltz	65	Concerto for Piano Left Hand	45
Symphony No 1	36	Piano Trio No 3, 'Essai in memoriam', Op 155	54	Introduction and Concert Allegro, Op 134	39	Burleske	97	Violin Concerto	45
Mendelssohn		Nova		Kinderszenen, Op 15 – Traümerei	71	Ein Heldenleben, Op 40	43	Wieniawski	
Andante cantabile e Presto agitato, WoO6	67	Melody – Elegy	71	Piano Concerto, Op 54	39	Violin Sonata	51	Légende, Op 17	57
The Hebrides, Op 32	36	P		Träumerei, Op 15 No 7	39	Strauss, R		Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op 16	57
Lied in A	67	Paganini		Violin Sonata No 2, Op 121	51	Divertimento	97	Wolfe, J	
A Midsummer Night's Dream – Incidental music, Op 61	36	Mose-Fantasia	57	Violin Sonata No 2, Op 121	51	King Roger	87	Anthracite Fields	80
Die schöne Melusine, Op 26	36	Moto perpetuo, Op 11	57	Scriabin, A		Z			
Sechs Lieder ohne Worte, Book 5, Op 62	67	Pasternak		Allegro de concert, Op 18	69	T			
Six Preludes and Fugues, Op 35	67	Two Preludes	69	Enigme, Op 52 No 2	69	Tavener			
Violin Sonata (1838)	51	Pettersson		Etudes – Op 2 No 1; Op 8 No 12	71	A Buddhist Miniature	80		
Mirzoyan		Symphony No 13	37	Fugues – WoO13; WoO20	69	A Cradle Song	80		
Introduction and Perpetuum mobile		Pleyel		Klavierstück, Anh16	69	The Founder's Prayer	80		
	55	Grand Concerto in D	42	Mazurkas – WoO15; WoO16	69	Ikon of the Nativity			
Moody		Sinfonia concertante	43	Nocturne, Op 9 No 2; WoO3	69	The Lamb	80		
O isplendor	80	Symphony in F	42	Nuances, Op 56 No 3	69	A New Commandment	80		
Moszkowski		Violin Concerto in D	42	Patetico, Op 8 No 12	69	Nunc dimittis (second setting)	80		
Etincelles, Op 36 No 6	71	Prokofiev		Piano Sonatas – No 4, Op 30; No 9, 'Black Mass', Op 68	69	O that we were there!	80		
Etincelles, Op 36 No 6 (arr Heifetz)		Symphonies – Nos 3 & 4	38	Poème, Op 32 No 1	69	O, do not move	80		
	48	Crisantemi	71	Poèmes – Op 41; Op 59 No 1	69	Resurrection – Paradise Choir	80		
Five Spanish Dances (arr Saurer)	48	La fanciulla del West	86	Preludes, Op 11 – selection	69	Sunrise in Your Heart	80		
Four Pieces, Op 82	48	R		Prometheus	97	Take him, earth, for cherishing	80		
Guitare, Op 45 No 2 (transcr Sarasate)	48	Rachmaninov		Quasi valse, Op 47	69	They are all gone into the world of light	80		
Serenata (arr Rehfeld)	48	Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Op 31		Scherzos – Op 46; WoO4; WoO5	69	Two Hadiths	80		
Suite for Two Violins, Op 71	48	Symphony No 3	38	Trois Etudes, Op 65 – Nos 2 & 3	69	Tchaikovsky			
Zwei Concertstücke, Op 16	48	Symphonic Dances, Op 45	38	Trois Pièces, Op 2 – Nos 2 & 3	69	Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op 42	57		
Mozart		Ravel		Trois Pièces, Op 45	69	Tellemann			
Adagio, K540	71	Piano Concerto for the Left Hand	97	Two Impromptus, Op 14	69	Sonatas, TWV41 – a4; B3; C2; C5; c2; d4; f1; F2; f2	52		
Adagio and Fugue, K546	78	Piano Concerto in G	31	Vers la flamme, Op 72	69	Sonatas, TWV41 – B3; B4; C2; C5; d4; f1; F2	52		
Concertos for Two Pianos – No 7, 'Lodron', K242; No 10, K365	36	Pièce en forme de Habanera	97	Waltzes – Op 1; WoO7	69	Twelve Solo Fantasias Without Bass, TWV40:2-13	52		
Davide penitente, K469	78	Rossini		Scriabin, J		V			
Piano Concertos – Nos 18 & 20 (arr Hummel)	49	La donna del lago	89	Four Preludes	69	Vanhal, JB			
Piano Duet Sonata, K381	36	Rzewski		Senfèches		Requiem in E flat major	43		
Piano Sonata No 10, K330	71	Four Hands	68	La harpe de mélodie	78	Symphony in A minor, Bryan a2	42		
Piano Sonatas – various	68	The People United Will Never Be Defeated	68	Sessions		Symphony in G major, Bryan G8	42		
Requiem – Confutatis; Lacrymosa	71	S		Adagio	51	Violin Concerto in B flat major	42		
Rondo, K485	71	Saint-Saëns		Duo	51	Verdi			
String Quintet No 3, K515	48	Africa, Op 89	39	Second Sonata	51	Falstaff	89		
Symphonies – No 35, 'Haffner'; No 36, 'Linz'; No 41, 'Jupiter' (arr Hummel)		Caprice-valse, 'Wedding Cake', Op 76	39	Sonata for Violin	51	Macbeth	89		
Mussorgsky		Cello Concertos – Nos 1 & 2	39	Waltz for Brenda	51	Vivaldi			
Songs – Various	79	Le carnaval des animaux	39	Shostakovich		Concerto for Two Violins, RV514	45		
N		Le cygne	65	Symphony No 8 – Toccata; Passacaglia (arr Margulis, Babadjanian)	71	Recorder Concertos – RV108; 'Il gardellino', RV428; 'La tempesta di mare', Op 10 No 1 RV433; 'La notte', Op 10 No 2 RV439; RV440; RV441; Op 3 No 11 RV565 – Largo	45		
Nielsen, C		Sarasate		Sibelius		Der Musikalische Garten – 'Zu Gast im blauen Haus'	57		
Clarinet Concerto	96	Malagueña, Op 21	57	Complete Symphonies (Nos 1-7)		Le Poème Harmonique – 'Coeur'	82		
Complete Symphonies	96	Romanza andaluza, Op 22	57	40		Quink Vocal Ensemble – 'Music, When Soft Voices Die'	82		
Flute Concerto	96	Zapateado, Op 23	57	Smetana		Schola Cantorum Budapestiensis – 'Hungarian Contemporary Vespers'	83		
Helios Overture	96	Satie		Complete Symphonies (Nos 1-7)		Olivia Sham – 'The Art of Remembering'	64		
Hymnus amoris	96	Gnossiennes – No 1; No 3; No 4.	74	Sibelius		Chouchane Siranossian – 'Angel Devil Priest'	45		
Maskarade	96	Ogives – No 1; No 2	74	Finlandia	97	St Ephraim Male Choir – 'Bartók and Folk'	83		
Prelude and Presto for solo violin	96	Scarlatti, D		Symphony No 7	97	St Ephraim Male Choir – 'Oriental Lumen II'	83		
Prelude and Theme with Variations	96	Keyboard Sonatas – Kk135; Kk380	71	The Swan of Tuonela	97				
Saul and David	96	Schubert		Violin Concerto	97				
Springtime in Funen – Den milde dag er lys og lang'	96	Allegro, 'Lebensstürme', D947	50	Smetana					
String Quartets – Nos 1-4	96	Andantino varié, D823	50	Dalibor	87				
Violin Concerto	96	Fantaisie, D940	50	Stebelt					
Violin Sonatas – Nos 1 & 2	96	Variations on an Original Theme,		Solér					
		D813		Harpsichord Sonatas – Various	80				
		Winterreise		Godowsky	65				

Rowan Williams

The Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and former Archbishop of Canterbury on Britten, Bach and the importance of plainsong

I first became aware of classical music when I was a small boy, listening to the radio, and to bits of Tchaikovsky and Handel. But it was only in my teens that I started to listen harder, and probably around my middle teens when I started getting interested in early music. I can remember hearing Monteverdi's *Vespers* in the Guildhall in Swansea in about 1966. I was beginning to absorb a bit more Mozart, and can also remember mid- to late-teens developing a lasting passion for Britten, and deep devotion to Vaughan Williams as well.

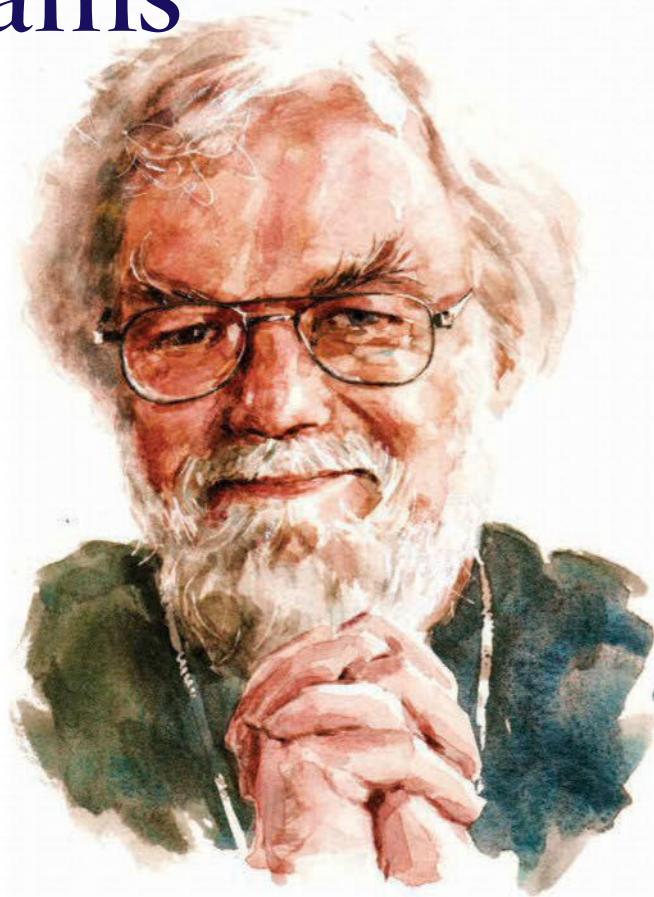
Vaughan Williams is a supreme melodist – I loved his touch with folk song. When I first heard the *Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus*, that was like a casement window opening, as they say. Though I wrestled also with the slightly less cuddly aspects of Vaughan Williams in the symphonies.

I have a memory of listening on a very imperfect little transistor radio in my bedroom in 1966 to the first performance of Britten's *The Burning Fiery Furnace* from the Aldeburgh Festival. There was something about Britten's sharpness of edge mixed again with a tremendous melodic gift – but much more of the fingernail on the glass side, the wire in the blood – that gives you a sense of unease, which fascinated me. We performed *The Little Sweep* at school, and the church parables were being written in my late teens and I listened eagerly as they emerged. I discovered Britten's *Missa brevis* when I was about 16, and I still believe it is one of the great liturgical Masses of the 20th century.

I've always been fascinated by *The Turn of the Screw* as an opera. Britten really succeeds in making the flesh creep musically. It's a lot to do with how he shifts the focus on a key register very slightly up or down, and of course in one of the key parts pushing up the register so that discomfort is generated. It's a really complex, sophisticated and seriously alarming work. It puts you in touch with bits of the imagination that you'd rather not know about.

Bach remains for me the unsurpassable. In my 20s, looking back, it was a gradual unfolding of discovery from the Passions which I really learnt to know well as an undergraduate, through to more and more of the instrumental works and the cello suites particularly.

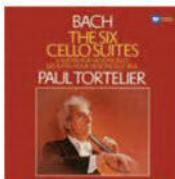
One of the things about Bach I find so compelling is that he will do the massed forces, and yet he can at the same time suggest with a single line any number of noises off, as it were. I've sometimes said of the cello suites that when you're listening to them you're left with an intense feeling that isn't a feeling about anything in particular. It's one of the things that makes listening to Bach – I know it's a cliché – like religious contemplation. It's not that you're feeling happy or



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Paul Tortelier vc Warner Classics



It's not in every respect the performance that I think most apt but it's the first I got to know – I still think the exuberance of the performance is a rare gift.

feeling sad or anything – but you have just been participating in something that so stretches your insides.

I think plainsong is a very intelligent kind of music. It requires thought and feeling, both paced carefully and anchored carefully. They say in a lot of religious communities that you can tell something about the spiritual health of a community by the quality of the chant in the choir. Are people listening to each other, are they breathing together?

I find it interesting now to listen to recordings of early music that I heard back when the works were just being dusted off. Taverner's *Missa Corona Spinea*, one of my favourite works, I first heard on a cold evening in Merton College Chapel in Oxford in 1974 when the assessment of Tudor pitch was a great deal more ungenerous than it is today. In between the movements everybody just went off to rest for 10 minutes because it was so demanding! Whereas now it's a bit more realistic. Happily there are some good recordings, I've got a quite old recording from the early '70s and a more recent one by St Mary's Cathedral Edinburgh which is very nicely done. **G**



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